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EVIDENCES

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

BY MENDON ASSOCIATION,
(MASSACHUSETTS.)

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ADVERTISEMENT.

MENDON ASSOCIATION, *at their ſtated Meeting, in October, 1796, taking into conſideration the increaſing prevalence of infidelity, and the uncommon exertions of many to prejudice the minds of people againſt revealed religion, conſidered it their duty to unite in their endeavors to check the progreſs of ſentiments ſo fatal to the ſouls of men, and injurious to ſociety. And, though they might not be able to offer any thing new, upon ſubjects, which have been treated, with great ability, by ancient and modern writers ; yet, they entertained a hope, that they could offer ſomething, which might be uſeful, in the preſent day, more eſpecially to thoſe, who have not acceſs to larger publications. Impreſſed with theſe views, they ſubmit the following pages to an impartial public, in hope they may afford aſſiſtance to all inquirers after truth.*

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EVIDENCES

EVIDENCES

OF

REVEALED RELIGION.

CHAPTER I.

The Evidence in Favor of REVEALED RELIGION, *arising from its Neceſſity and Importance to Mankind.*

BELIEVING, that the light of nature, and the intelligent powers of men, are ſufficient for all the purpoſes of religion, Deiſts reject a particular revelation, as altogether needleſs. Nature, they ſay, is a ſure guide in all the walks of piety; and man needs no other inſtructor, they affirm, than the voice of nature, to direct him through the journey of life, and to bring him ſafely to the regions of bliſs. And, of courſe, they highly extol the light of nature, and the rational

powers

powers of man, and exert all their ability, wit, and railery, to depreciate the Bible, and to make people believe it is an impoſition on their good underſtanding.

Paſſing over the bold aſſertions and vain triumphs of infidels, it is very plain, that they have but a ſlight acquaintance with the heart of man, his paſſions, inclinations, prejudices, and ſelfiſhneſs, by which he is groſsly blinded and turned aſide from the line of duty. In all their remarks upon religion, theſe men take it as a given point, that the heart of man is pure, that his intentions are innocent, and his feelings, in general, right. And they, hence, conclude, that he needs not a particular revelation to teach him the character of God, and the religious and ſocial duties he owes his Creator and fellow creatures. Should it be granted, for the ſake of argument, that man is not the ſubject of depravity; that his heart is pure and clean; that he ſtill retains that ſtate of innocence and rectitude, in which the firſt man was created; yet, it would not be a certain conſequence, that he needs not a revelation to make known to him the will and pleaſure of his Maker, and many duties owing to his neighbors. In a ſtate of ſinleſs perfection, man, it is granted, might reaſon, from the works of creation and providence, that God is great, and powerful, and wiſe, and benevolent, and that he ought to love a being, ſo glorious and munificent. But ſhould the queſtion be aſked him, in what way he muſt render this love? In what manner God is to be wor-

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ſhipped by him ? His lips would be cloſed in ſilence ; he could not make a pertinent reply. For, although the light of nature may exhibit, to an holy being, the attributes of the eternal God, yet it does not teach the form, or manner in which dependent beings are bound to worſhip him. And, accordingly, we find, that there were divine communications between heaven and earth, that God appeared and converſed with our firſt parents, before their fall. And, according to the Bible, the holy angels are repreſented as deſiring to look into the ſcheme of redemption.

It cannot be granted, however, that man is, now, in a ſtate of innocence, or that he has been in a ſtate of innocence, at any time, as far back, as we have any evidence of his character and conduct, from the moſt early hiſtories. From the firſt riſe of civil ſocieties and kingdoms, the page of hiſtory has been faithful in recording the evil paſſions and immoral conduct of man. The hiſtory of man is a hiſtory of murder, aſſaſſination, maſſacre, robbery, theft, perjury, injuſtice, tyranny, intemperance, debauchery, pride, and ambition. Theſe are ſins. And they are ſuch ſins as prove, that man is in a fallen ſtate ; that he is not an innocent being ; that his affections are very wicked ; and that he is, in fact, a rebel againſt God, and the enemy of righteouſneſs. To deny, that man is depraved, that he is inclined to every evil paſſion, is to confeſs one's ignorance of human nature. So many and ſo forcible are the arguments to prove the amazing wickedneſs of Ad-

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am's race, that one may as well deny any ſentiment of religion, as this. And from this wickedneſs, it is eaſy to conceive, will ariſe falſe notions of God, of his character, law, and government. From this ſource have flowed all the errors, ſuperſtition, impiety, and idolatry, that have exiſted in the world. And from this principle we may fafely argue *the need and importance of a particular revelation* to inſtruct man in duty, and to animate his heart with the encouragements of religion.

To prove and illuſtrate this truth ſhall be our preſent taſk. In doing this, let it be obſerved,

1. That without a particular revelation, men could not know, that God would forgive their ſins.

Being ſenſible of their wickedneſs, and the miſeries to which they are conſequently expoſed, in this life, they might form conjectures and ſurmiſes about another world, as being either a ſtate of happineſs, or miſery. And they might ardently deſire to be releaſed from the puniſhment, juſtly due to their ſins. But their deſires would be attended with doubt and perplexities, which would damp all their hopes, and fill them with the keeneſt diſtreſs, whenever they ſeriouſly reflected on their unhappy ſtate. From the voice of nature, it is plain, they could receive no relief. For nature exhibits no certain, concluſive, evidence, that God will pardon tranſgreſſors. It may teach, that he is wiſe, and powerful, and beneficent. But it does not teach what is his pleaſure and determination

tion reſpecting ſinners, and the puniſhment due to ſin. As God ſuffers men to be ſinful, in this life, and to endure pain and miſery, ſo he may ſuffer this to be the condition of ſinning man, during eternity. At leaſt, neither the light of nature, nor the reaſoning powers of the human mind, are ſufficient to prove, to a certainty, which leaves no room for doubt, that God will forgive the tranſgreſſions of his creatures, and receive them into his favor.

To one believing and defending the innocence of man, theſe remarks will appear inconſiſtent and ridiculous. But, as the evidence of human depravity has ever been clear ; as the wickedneſs of man has been apparent among all nations, and all ages ; as *O the times ! O the manners !* has been the common exclamation of poets, hiſtorians, and orators ; ſo we may ſafely conclude, that the human heart is very corrupt, that ſins muſt be forgiven, or men will be miſerable, and that there is no help nor hope, for men, but in the mere ſovereign pleaſure and mercy of God. But whether or not God will be merciful, is a queſtion, that cannot be reſolved by the voice of nature, nor the reaſoning faculties of man.

That ſins muſt be forgiven, in order that man may be happy, is evident from the religious rites and ceremonies, which have been, and ſtill are, prevalent among the heathen. In their ſacrifices and oblations, the heathen ever acted upon the principle that their gods were offended with them, and that ſomething ought to be done to appeaſe

their

their anger. Hence, they built temples, inſtituted religious ſervice, appointed ſacrifices, and a long train of ceremonies. That the gods were to be appeaſed by the offering of victims, appears to have been the current opinion of the heathen world. For the practice of expiating ſins, by ſacrifices, was prevalent, not only among the poor, but among the rich; not only among the ignorant, but among the learned and wiſe. And this affords concluſive evidence, that the heathen believed their ſins muſt be forgiven, in order to their happineſs.

But their ſacrifices and expiations were impious and barbarous, to the higheſt degree. From the nature of their ſacrifices, it is manifeſt, that they were extremely ignorant of the true character of God, and that they knew nothing of the rational, conſiſtent mode, of obtaining pardon from him. And, hence, appears the need of a particular revelation from heaven, to teach them the true character of God; to teach them, that he is diſpoſed to forgive ſin; and to teach the mode, in which ſin may be forgiven.

Many of the ancient philoſophers acknowledged, that, till God ſhould reveal himſelf, in ſome extraordinary manner, it would be impoſſible to know, what religious ſervice would be moſt acceptable to him. And, of courſe, they muſt have been entirely ignorant of his determinations, in regard to ſinners. To men, thus conſcious of their ignorance, and wandering about in perplexity and fear, a revelation from God muſt have been very

welcome.

welcome. But, to infidels of the preſent age, this revelation is not *glad tidings of great joy*. The light of nature, they are confident, is ſufficient to guide them in the right way. They have no anxiety about their ſins. They feel no danger of coming wrath; and they ſeem to be as unconcerned about their future exiſtence, as the beaſts of the field. To prove the need of a particular revelation, it may be obſerved,

2. That the light of nature gives no knowledge of a Redeemer.

Whatever perfections of God are diſcoverable by the light of nature, it is, if we miſtake not, a given point, that nature affords no knowledge of a Redeemer. How highly ſoever infidels may extol the voice of nature, and the abilities of man, yet they preſume not to ſay, that from theſe ſources can be derived any knowledge, or intimation, that God has provided a Savior for ſinful man. Should we ſearch the volume of nature, with the moſt critical nicety, and examine what are called the common providences of God, we could gain no evidence from them, that God has one only begotten and well beloved Son, and that this Son has been appointed the Savior of men, and ſent into this world to work out redemption for them.

To revelation, therefore, muſt we appeal for this comfortable knowledge. And, accordingly, we behold, in the Bible, the character of the Redeemer unfolding itſelf to view. By an expreſs revelation, God has been pleaſed to teach men, that he has an only begotten Son; that he has

ſanctified and ſent him into the world ; that he made a covenant with him for the redemption of apoſtate man ; that this Son of God has appeared, eſtabliſhed a pure religion, ſuffered, died, and riſen for the juſtification of men, and aſcended into heaven to appear as an interceſſor before the throne of grace.

Theſe truths are plainly revealed in the Bible, and they are truths, which are not taught, in any way, but by a particular revelation. If God condeſcend to grant unto man a particular revelation, we may expect to find in it ſome important doctrines, that could not, poſſibly, be aſcertained by the light of nature. For, if the light of nature were of itſelf ſufficient to guide men, in the way of truth, then there would be no neceſſity of a particular manifeſtation of the divine will, by an audible voice from on high, or by dreams, viſions, ſigns, miracles, or prophecy. And as we hope to make evident, in the courſe of this ſubject, that the Bible is the word of God, given to men, by the particular inſpiration of the Almighty ; ſo we ſhall find it has manifeſted to view the character of a Savior, his miniſtry, preaching, religion, and what he did to lay a foundation for the pardon of ſinners. Theſe are the leading truths of the Bible: And they are doctrines, of which nature is entirely ignorant.

If men are ſinners ; if it be of any importance to them to obtain the pardon, of their ſins ; if the ſure knowledge, that God is willing to pardon, on certain conditions, can yield them any comfort ; if

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it be important to know the mode in which pardon is conveyed, and the character of that divine perſon, for whoſe ſake pardon is granted to the penitent, then, that men greatly need a particular revelation, is a plain undeniable truth.

To evade this concluſion, Deiſts muſt ſay, that repentance alone is ſufficient to lay a foundation for pardon. How does this appear? What evidence have they, either from the works of creation or providence, that God will pardon the ſinner, on condition he repents? To challenge them to produce this evidence, to ſhew what it is, and wherein it conſiſts, is not aſſuming a haughty tone. If there be any evidence of this kind, they can, undoubtedly, bring it to view. And it muſt be ſuch evidence, as will give complete ſatisfaction, and remove from the mind every doubt and ſcruple. Of this nature we can find ſatisfactory evidence, in the Bible. But we cannot find it, in any arguments, or conjectures, or ſuppoſitions, of infidel writers. And theſe gentlemen ought to know, that the ſoul, oppreſſed with the burden of ſin, and longing to be free of its guilt, cannot reſt ſatisfied, in any thing, ſhort of abſolute certainty. And none of them, it is believed, will pretend, that their ſcheme can yield a knowledge, or certainty, which will baniſh all anxiety and doubt from the mind.

Conſidering men as guided wholly by the light of nature, as knowing nothing of the Redeemer and ſalvation through his righteouſneſs, it may be aſked, on what foundation is their religion built?

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They have hopes, it will be ſaid, of pardon and eternal life beyond the grave. But what is the foundation of their hopes? Are their hopes built on their innocence, or obedience, or repentance? Who among men is innocent? Who is perfectly obedient? None will pretend, that men, in their preſent ſtate, are perfect beings, or that they render to God the obedience, which is juſtly his due. On what principle, then, is mercy to be extended to them? What claim has a tranſgreſſor to the mercy of God? Will the light of nature ſupport and vindicate this claim? What title, in the nature of things, have ſinners, to either preſent, or future, happineſs? The higheſt probability, at which the light of nature can arrive, in this caſe, is, that, conſidering the compaſſion of the Creator, and the infirmity of men, God may take pity on them, and accept their endeavors, notwithſtanding all their failings. But even this probability is not built on a ſure and certain foundation. For, if a compaſſionate God may righteouſly ſuffer his creatures to experience miſery, in this world, he may alſo righteouſly bring miſery on them, in the coming world.

Should it be granted, that repentance alone is a ſufficient foundation for pardon: Yet, it may be ſaid, that impunity, mere forgiveneſs, is not the thing, which nature craves. "The eyes of men," ſays Biſhop Sherlock, "are looking to immortality. Their deſires are ſtretching to immortality. And they wiſh for ſomething more, than theſe ſlender, theſe inſufficient expectations,

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that are founded on mere conjecture. But the argument for divine mercy, when built on the ſimple religion of nature, cannot reach beyond mere probability, beyond a mere conjecture of what may take place."

To men deſtitute of the Bible and truſting in natural religion, repentance is their only ſhelter from divine wrath. But repentance, at beſt, is a feeble, uncertain, place of ſecurity againſt puniſhment. For, natural religion yields no abſolute certainty, that repentance is available to pardon, that an holy God will forgive ſinners, on condition they do repent. But, from the revelation, which God has been pleaſed to give of himſelf and of his Son, the Redeemer, we have the moſt ſure and animating evidence, that our repentance will not be in vain. In the Bible, we are plainly told, that, *he, who repenteth and believeth ſhall be forgiven.* The Bible informs, that, by our repentance, we ſhall obtain forgiveneſs of God, through the righteouſneſs of his Son, who is the Mediator between God and man. By receiving the Bible, as the word of God, and cordially complying with the terms of ſalvation it holds out to their acceptance, men will be freed from wandering in the mazes and labyrinths of human reaſon, and from contemplating the perfections of Deity through the dim light of nature. The Bible unfolds to our view the benevolent and immutable determination of God to grant, for the ſake of his Son, pardon and eternal life, to all claſſes of men, who ſincerely repent of their ſins, and return to

their Maker with a broken heart. This is a moſt important, animating truth. And, as it is not diſcoverable by the light of nature; but is made known to men by the goſpel, we may, hence, learn the need of a particular revelation to teach this truth. Having advanced thus far in the ſubject, we obſerve,

3. That the light of nature is inſufficient to teach men the whole of moral duty.

To examine what the light of nature has done, in teaching men the duties they owe to God and one another, is a fair way of finding out what it can do. In ancient times, when revealed religion was confined wholly to the poſterity of *Abraham*, and before Chriſtianity was publiſhed through the world, men were entirely under the direction of the light of nature, in all their religious inquiries. In order, therefore, to have a fair trial of the ability of the light of nature, we muſt go back to theſe ancient times, and examine the religious ſtate of the world, and the ſentiments of morality prevalent among men. If the unaſſiſted powers of nature were then ſufficient to ſhew men the whole of moral duty, to teach them the nature of virtue and vice, and the difference between right and wrong, and to exhibit all the beauties of virtue, and all the deformities of vice, it is probable, that we ſhall find ſome nations, or cities, or ſects of men, or individual perſons, who underſtood the true nature of morality, in all its ramifications, and put it into practice. But, if no ſuch perſons, nor ſocieties, can be found, then it

will

will be fair reaſoning to ſay, that the light of nature was not ſufficient to teach them the whole of moral duty.

And, that we may not be taxed with partiality, or unfairneſs, in this examination, our inquiry ſhall not be confined to the wandering Tartars, nor Arabians, nor to the rude unpoliſhed nations in the north of Europe, nor to the lower claſſes of people in any nation. But we will confine ourſelves to thoſe nations where learning flouriſhed, and where all the arts of civilized life were cultivated and carried to a very high ſtate of perfection. And, that every objection of unfairneſs may be removed, we will ſelect, from among theſe civilized nations, a few of their firſt characters, men celebrated for their virtue and philoſophy.—For theſe men, if any, were ſurely able to examine the powers of nature, to ſearch out all the truths, taught by the light of nature, and teach them to others.

But the beſt philoſophers and moraliſts, among the heathen, acknowledged their ignorance, in ſome points of duty. They were not even agreed among themſelves, what, in many inſtances, was virtue and vice. Varro, an ancient philoſopher, obſerves, that among the great men of the heathen world, there were not leſs than two hundred and eighty opinions concerning that one queſtion, what was the chief good, or final happineſs of man. They often called evil good; and good they called evil; they put darkneſs for light; and light for darkneſs. And what of moral duty they

did

did know, they had not power to enforce upon the common people, who in thoſe times, were extremely ignorant.

Of all the heathen philoſophers, *Socrates*, *Plato*, and *Seneca*, were the moſt famous; and they ſaid many excellent things about the immortality of the ſoul, and the rewards and puniſhments due to the virtuous and vicious, in the next ſtate of being. But many of their doctrines were ſo wrapped up in myſticiſm and ſimilitudes, that they were far beyond the comprehenſion of the vulgar. To the great reproach of theſe philoſophers, it is a fact, that, in public, they taught one ſentiment, and, in their private ſchools, its oppoſite. And, of courſe, they were men unſuitable to enlighten the world, and inculcate the principles of true morality.

That all virtue conſiſted in pleaſure, that it was perfectly right for men to gratify every inclination and paſſion of their ſouls and bodies, was the doctrine of Epicurus and his diſciples. And, hence in the opinion of theſe moraliſts, revenge, ſelfiſhneſs, intemperance, and debauchery, were no crimes: For, by indulging themſelves in theſe things, they only gratified their inclinations, and enjoyed the pleaſures for which they were made. Inſtead of inſtructing the mind and reforming the heart, theſe doctrines were a curſe to ſociety; and they lead to atheiſm, both in theory and practice.

The Stoics, another ſect of philoſophers, founded, at Athens, by the celebrated Zeno, did not

teach

teach a ſyſtem of morality much ſuperior to that of the Epicureans. They taught, that men ought to feel equally indifferent to pleaſure or pain, to adverſity or proſperity, and that to be ſtretched on a rack, or to repoſe on a bed of roſes, are, to a wiſe man, matters of equal indifference. They taught, "that a wiſe man ought never to be influenced by favors, nor ever to pardon an offence; that it is an argument of weakneſs and folly to be ſoftened by ſentiments of compaſſion; that a truly manly character is equally inacceſſible to entreaties and prayers; that every offence is a mortal ſin; that he, who ſmothers a cock without neceſſity, is no leſs guilty than the man, who ſmothers his father; that the wiſe man never doubts, never repents, is never deceived, and never changes his mind; and that to alter one's ſentiments, is ſhameful; to yield to prayers and entreaties, a crime; and to be compaſſionate, a ſcandalous weakneſs."*

From the ſentiments of the Stoics, it clearly follows, that no injury is done to a wiſe man, by robbing him of his money, by cutting off his arm, or leg, by murdering his friend, or ſtealing his child. For no crime is committed; nothing is taken from him of any value; nothing, at the loſs of which he ought to repine. Theſe philoſophers taught, it is true, ſubmiſſion to the divine will; but they alſo taught, that a man had a right to take away his own life, when, and how he pleaſed.

* Cicero's Oration for Muræna, Sec. xxx, xxxi. p. 262—264, Duncan's tranſlation.

ed. In this they followed the ſentiment and example of Zeno, their founder, who, in a pet, hanged himſelf, becauſe he hurt his finger.† The general ſcheme of morality, taught by theſe philoſophers, is as far removed from the truth, as light is from darkneſs.

Seneca taught the immortality of the ſoul. But he alſo taught, that men, at death, are reduced to nothing, and that the tranquillity of the dead is the ſame as the tranquillity of thoſe, who are not born. He taught, that when we die, we are reduced to the elements, from whence we came, and loſe all perſonal exiſtence; that there is no future puniſhment of the vicious, nor rewards for the virtuous; and that it is of no conſequence, whether we exiſt or not, after this life is done.—The ſame philoſopher inculcated the ſentiment, that pity and compaſſion are unbecoming men; that we ought not to grieve at any calamities, that may befal others; and that to conſole them in any of their afflictions, is acting unworthy of the character of wiſe men.

Let it now be determined, whether or not the light of nature be ſufficient to teach men the whole of moral duty. The philoſophers, whoſe ſentiments on morality we have rehearſed, enjoyed all the advantages of antiquity; they lived among the moſt polite and learned nations; they were favored with all the ſentiments of their predeceſſors; and, yet, with all theſe helps, they were not able

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† See Dr. Beatie's Evidence, who refers to Diogenes Laertius.

to form a conſiſtent ſyſtem of morality. They were unable to enlighten and reform either themſelves, or others, in point of religious knowledge. Will a ſyſtem, which teaches, that all happineſs conſiſts in ſenſual gratifications, be likely to correct the evil habits of men, and to lay a ſuitable reſtraint on all their unruly paſſions and inclinations? Will a ſyſtem, like that of the Stoics, which directs men to be abſolutely indifferent about good and evil, be likely to ſtimulate them in the path of virtue? In every view of the ſubject, the doctrines of the heathen philoſophers were inſufficient to effect a reformation, either in faith or practice. Their ſyſtems were deſigned as ſubjects of amuſement and diſputation, rather than of inſtructing and amending the heart. The greater part of thoſe, whom antiquity honored with the name of philoſophers, were men of looſe principles and corrupt lives. Many of them diſgraced human reaſon, by their vicious doctrines and ſophiſtical wrangling; and ſome by their debauchery, impudence, and beſtiality. Theſe are not our aſſertions. They are the ſentiments of Lactantius, Cicero, and Ariſtotle.

Since neither the common people, nor the philoſophers of antiquity, had a conſiſtent plan of morality; ſince they believed in many dangerous and corrupt ſentiments; and ſince they were, in general, men of debauched lives, it clearly follows, that the light of nature was an inſufficient guide, and that they greatly needed a particular revelation, a divine teacher from heaven, to teach them their duty.

Whatever

Whatever may be the vain boaſtings of modern infidels, about the ſufficiency of Nature's light, and the abſurdity of believing, that God has taught men, in a ſupernatural way; that is, by a particular revelation, by ſending unto them prophets, and his own Son, and holy apoſtles; yet, the beſt and wiſeſt of heathen philoſophers ever confeſſed their ignorance, and often expreſſed their earneſt deſires, that a divine meſſenger would come, from heaven, to be their inſtructor. "Ye may give over," ſaid Socrates, "all hopes of amending men's lives, for the future, unleſs God be pleaſed to ſend ſome other perſon to inſtruct you."* To this we may add the teſtimony of Plato: "Whatever," ſaid he, "is ſet right and as it ſhould be, in the preſent evil ſtate of the world, can be ſo *only* by the *particular interpoſition* of God."* And yet modern infidels pretend to be better acquainted with the religious ſtate of the ancient heathen nations, than theſe great philoſophers. The beſt men of antiquity were anxious of receiving a divine teacher from heaven; and infidels of the preſent age are as anxious to vilify and traduce his character and religion, now that the Son of God has come, and *preached righteouſneſs in the great congregation.* Contrary to the conviction and declarations of the wiſeſt and moſt virtuous moraliſts of antiquity, modern freethinkers ſay, that men need not a revelation to teach them any moral duty whatever. Can it be, that men, who talk in this ſtrain, have any acquaint-

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* See the Evidence of Natural and Revealed Religion, by Dr. S. Clarke; in Watſon's Tracts, p. 205, vol. iv.

ance with the ſtate of the world, antecedently to the coming and preaching of the Son of God? Can it be, that they have, ever read with care, the writings of heathen poets and philoſophers, and learned what doctrines they taught, and how incapable they were of leading men, in the path of righteouſneſs, and conducting them to glory hereafter? Are theſe men deſirous of reverting back to heatheniſm, to the impure and obſcene worſhip of idols, and to the debauched morals of antiquity? They may ſay, perhaps, We know more of moral duty, than the heathen ever did. But from what ſource have they obtained this knowledge? Is the light of nature more clear, than formerly? Are the powers of nature more acute, vigilant, and penetrating, than formerly? Are the intellects of men more ſagacious and diſcerning? To the goſpel, which has been the happy means of ſpreading light around the world, they are indebted, it is certain, for a more perfect and clear view, which they have of God, and the duties they owe him and one another.—What infidels call natural religion, is, in a great meaſure, as Rouſſeau confeſſes, derived from that very ſcripture, which they deſpiſe and reject with diſdain.

When the Son of God appeared, he taught a ſyſtem of piety and morality, which as much excels the morality of Confucius, of Zoroaſter, of Socrates, of Plato, of Seneca, and Epictetus, as the meridian ſun excels the faint glimmerings of a taper. The religion of Chriſt purifies the heart; inſtructs the ignorant; unites men together in the

bands of love ; weans their affections from this world ; animates them with the hope of unfading glory ; forbids injuſtice, malice, debauchery, and covetouſneſs ; and inculcates purity of heart, chaſtity of conduct, and every virtue ornamental to human nature, happifying to man as an individual, and beneficial to ſociety. The religion of Chriſt, believed and practiſed, will guide a man, in ſafety, through this world, and prepare him for heaven. We obſerve,

4. That the light of nature is inſufficient to teach the whole of God's moral character, and to ſhew in what manner he is to be worſhipped.

On what principle ſhall we account for the polytheiſm of the ancients, if we grant that the light of nature be a guide ſufficient to teach the whole of God's character, and the worſhip, that is due to him alone ? In this age of the world, we have clear conviction, that there is but one God, and that he alone is the object of worſhip. But our advantages are ſuperior to thoſe of the ancient heathens. Deiſts think, that, from the works of creation and providence, it may be clearly known, there is only one God. But the heathen enjoyed all the knowledge ariſing from the works of creation and providence, and yet they held to a multiplicity of gods, and their worſhip was, in the higheſt degree abſurd and impious. And this idolatry ſpread, not only among the ignorant and barbarous nations, but among the enlightened and civilized. And, that learning and civilization did not cure men of their idolatry, and inſpire them with juſt ſentiments of God, and the wor-

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ſhip due to him, is apparent, from the ſentiments and practice of the Grecians and Romans, who, of all the ancient nations, were the wiſeſt and moſt refined. As they increaſed in riches, dominion, and literature, ſo they increaſed in multiplying gods, in building temples, and adding to their obſcene and impious rites. As their gods were, generally, departed heroes, whom they deified after death, ſo their characters were a mixture of every thing that is baſe, contentious, and vicious. In the words of Mr. Pope, they made,

> "Gods partial, changeful, paſſionate, unjuſt,
> Whoſe attributes were rage, revenge, and luſt;
> Such as the ſouls of cowards might conceive,
> And form'd like tyrants, tyrants would believe."

Their Jupiter was a debauchee; Venus, a proſtitute; Juno, a ſcold; Hercules, a ſwaggerer; Mars, a braggadocio; Neptune, a profane, ſeafaring captain; and Bacchus, a drunkard. Theſe are high charges; but they are ſupported by the hiſtory of the heathen gods, written by Homer, Virgil, and other ancient poets.

Admitting the writers of the Bible to have been verſed in the heathen mythology, it is manifeſt, that the nations of the world, in a ſhort time, after the flood, became vain in their imaginations, and that their fooliſh hearts were, ſoon, darkened. They profeſſed themſelves to be wiſe, but became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beaſts, and creeping things. They worſhipped gods, who preſided over mountains, hills, plains, valleys,

valleys, trees, and fields of corn ; over ſeas, rivers, brooks, and lakes ; they worſhipped not only the virtues of men, but all the vices and corruptions of the human heart ; they worſhipped the ſun, moon, and ſtars ; they worſhipped oxen, ſerpents, and toads. As was the character of their gods, ſuch was the worſhip inſtituted to them. Venus was worſhipped by proſtitution ; Bacchus, by intemperance ; and Moloch, by ſacrificing human victims to his rage. The killing of men and women, and offering them in ſacrifice to appeaſe the anger of their gods, was no uncommon ſight, in the days of Paganiſm. " To give you an account of the religion and divinity of the vulgar, in the days of heatheniſm," ſays Biſhop Sherlock, " would be to entertain you with an hiſtory of folly and ſuperſtition, ſome parts of which, for the barbarity of them, and ſome for the lewdneſs of them, are very unfit to be related, in a chriſtian congregation. The people thought of their gods much after the rate that the old poets wrote of them ; and their ſacred hiſtory was only a narration of the battles and quarrels, and loves and amours of their deities. Their practice, in religion, was agreeable to their articles of belief.—Their impure deities were worſhipped in acts of impurity ; and their cruel deities, by acts of cruelty."

By this hiſtory of their gods, and their ſentiments of their gods, and the abſurd and impure worſhip paid to them, we may ſee, that the being and perfections of the true God, and the pure and

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holy worſhip due to him, were much obſcured, if not wholly obliterated, in the heathen world. And, from hence, we may learn the neceſſity of a particular revelation from heaven, to teach the unity and attributes of the only true God, to ſcatter the darkneſs of ſuperſtition and idolatry, and teach men the ſimple, ſublime, and holy worſhip, which ought to be paid him.

Between the days of Noah and Jeſus Chriſt were about two thouſand years. And during this long period, idolatry was the eſtabliſhed religion of all nations, the Iſraelites excepted. And it ſeems, at the firſt bluſh, that the common ſenſe of men, eſpecially of the learned and civilized, would have taught them the abſurdity of worſhipping ſo many gods, and the impiety of the worſhip paid them. But neither their common ſenſe, nor the light of nature, taught them to ſee, that there was *a lie in their right hands*. With all their great abilities, with all their fine ſpeculations and reaſonings, the wiſeſt philoſophers were not able to inſtruct and reform themſelves, nor deliver their minds from the abſurdity of adoring idols. To prove, that this is true of even the wiſeſt of the heathen philoſophers, we ſhall ſtate, in the words of Biſhop Sherlock, the caſe of Socrates, the great heathen philoſopher. "Were all the wiſe men of antiquity," ſays the Biſhop, "to plead their cauſe, they could not get a more able counſellor. This wiſe man, this great philoſopher, had talked ſo freely about the heathen deities, and the ridiculous ſtories told of them, that he fell un-

der the ſuſpicion of deſpiſing the gods of his country, and of teaching the young people, in Athens, to deſpiſe their altars and worſhip. An accuſation was accordingly brought againſt him, of ſlighting and deſpiſing the gods worſhipped by his countrymen. He was complained of to the high court of the Areopagites, which was the ſupreme council of the nation. When brought before this court, he defended himſelf, in the moſt learned manner, and clearly proved, that the accuſation was entirely deſtitute of any evidence. For, he aſſerted and maintained, before his judges, that he worſhipped all the gods of his country; that he obſerved, in the moſt ſtrict manner, all the religious rites and ceremonies inſtituted to theſe gods; that he ſacrificed to them, in private; that he ſacrificed to them, in public, upon the eſtabliſhed altars, according to the rites and cuſtoms of the city.—After this public confeſſion and defence of Socrates, we need not heſitate about his true character. He was an idolator, and had not, by his great wiſdom and ability, in reaſoning, delivered his own mind from the ſuperſtition and miſtakes, that were ſo prevalent, in the heathen world.—Can the wiſdom of the world go further, in any caſe, than in the caſe of Socrates? He is allowed, on all hands, to have been the wiſeſt and greateſt man of antiquity, to have been the moſt able philoſopher, that the heathen world ever produced. And, yet, we ſee, by his own confeſſion and defence, made before his judges, he was an idolator."

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If the light of nature, aided by the wiſdom and experience of Socrates, could not deliver himſelf nor the people of Athens, from the abſurdity of heathen ſuperſtition, is it a ſuppoſable caſe, that the light of nature would be more inſtructive and efficacious, in the preſent age of the world? Deiſts can, now, eaſily diſcern the folly and impiety of heathen idolatry. They underſtand, that idols, and the obſcene, barbarous, and impious worſhip, formerly given them, are ridiculous and inconſiſtent. From whence did they gain this knowledge? Who delivered the nations of Europe from the religious folly and ſuperſtition of Paganiſm? Who hath enlightened and reformed their minds? Will modern infidels pretend, that they have more ſagacity, than the ancient philoſophers? That the light of nature is more clear, than formerly? Can they ſtate the time, when the nations of Europe renounced their idolatry, deſerted temples built to idols, believed in the unity of God, and obtained juſt ſentiments of his character, government, and the worſhip, due to him? To act an ingenuous part, muſt they not impute this great reformation, in ſentiment and conduct, to the preaching and propagating of that goſpel, which they ridicule and deſpiſe? They may be defied to name any other means.

"After that, in the wiſdom of God, the world by wiſdom knew not God, it pleaſed God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them that believe." (1 Cor. i. 21.) The philoſophers and their diſciples had labored, many hundred years,

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to reclaim men, and inſtruct them, in what they deemed the principles of religion. And during all this long ſpace of time, with all the wiſdom of their wiſeſt men, the nations of the earth, inſtead of growing more wiſe, grew more ignorant of God and his character; and, inſtead of reforming their morals and rites of worſhip, they grew more immoral and ſuperſtitious. But when, it pleaſed God by *(what wicked men call)* the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſcatter light through the world, then the deſpiſed goſpel of Chriſt prevailed among the moſt powerful and learned nations. The minds of men were enlightened, their ſentiments were corrected, and their morals and modes of worſhip were changed. Wherever the goſpel came, the ignorance and ſuperſtitions of heatheniſm fled before it. The exhibition of divine truth diſſipated thoſe dark clouds of ſuperſtition, which had obſcured and bewildered the minds of men. Heathen temples were forſaken and ſhut up, their altars were left, and the worſhippers, in general, embraced the faith and piety of the goſpel.

But the freethinkers of the age eſteem the goſpel as an impoſition on common ſenſe, as of no benefit to the world. That men have no need of a divine revelation, is, with them, a favorite maxim. To a man acquainted with the religious ſentiments and moral character of the ancient heathen, and the ſurpriſing alteration effected, by the preaching of the goſpel, this maxim will appear as ridiculous, as it is abſurd. For, if divine revelation had not been communicated to men, it is

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more than probable, the world would, ſtill, have been ſunken in all the depths of heathen darkneſs, ſuperſtition, and wickedneſs. Inſtead of a rational and pure worſhip, which men, now, enjoy, they would have been bowing down to ſtocks and ſtones. Inſtead of ſolemn prayer and praiſe, and the inſtruction, received from the preaching of God's holy word, they would have been offering human victims, and attempting to appeaſe the gods, by the moſt abſurd and impious rites. Inſtead of convening together, in houſes of prayer, where they can worſhip the *Trinity* in *Unity*, they would have been paying their ſtupid devotions to Jupiter, or Saturn, or Neptune, or Apollo, or Juno, or Venus, or Diana, or ſome other of the numerous gods and goddeſſes, whom the ancient heathen, formerly, worſhipped, and whom many of the nations of the earth do now worſhip. To continue the ſubject, we ſhall obſerve,

5. That men need a revelation, to teach them the certainty of the immortality of the ſoul, of the reſurrection of the body to another life, and the nature of rewards and puniſhments, in the other ſtate of being.

That the ſouls of men are *certainly* immortal, is a doctrine, taught only by ſpecial revelation from heaven. Philoſophers and moraliſts, may reaſon upon the nature of the ſoul, and demonſtrate its ſpirituality, and indiviſibility, its deſires and expectations of exiſting hereafter, and its dread of annihilation; and from theſe premiſes may conclude, that the ſoul of man is immortal; and the

concluſion may yield a degree of ſatisfaction to a contemplative mind. But, on this concluſion there is no abſolute dependence: For God, who created the ſoul, on whoſe power and goodneſs it is dependent for conſtant exiſtence, may eaſily reduce it to its original ſtate of not being. And, that God will not annihilate the ſoul, that he will continue it, in exiſtence, during eternity, nature furniſhes no argument, it gives us no certain evidence. Its ſpirituality is no defence, no preſervative, if God will that death ſhould ſeal up all its powers, in eternal night. All its ardent deſires and expectations of an immortal exiſtence, beyond the grave, may be, eaſily, fruſtrated, by that omnipotent hand, which firſt gave it exiſtence. And of courſe, that the ſoul is immortal is wholly dependent on the ſovereign pleaſure of God; and our ſure knowledge of its immortality is wholly derived from the light of revelation. In the Bible, we are plainly and expreſsly taught, that the human ſoul is an immortal being.

But the light of nature affords no certain and concluſive evidence of this truth. And, accordingly, the greater part of Deiſts, who reject the Bible, as a ſyſtem of fables and nonſenſe, either deny the immortality of the ſoul, or ridicule the ſentiment, or ſpeak of it as a ſubject, which is very uncertain and dubious. And the ſame was the language of the ancient philoſophers. Having no ſure principles, on which to build their belief of the ſoul's immortality, they were conſtantly filled with doubts and perplexities. They ſeemed to be convinced,

vinced, at times, of the certainty of a future ſtate. And, at other times, they expreſſed themſelves with a great degree of heſitancy and inſtability. "I am going," ſaid Socrates to his friends, a little before his death, "I am going from hence, and am about to leave this world; ye are ſtill to continue in it; which of us have the better part allotted us, God only knows." At the concluſion of his diſcourſe on the immortality of the ſoul, he ſaid to his friends, "I would have you to know, that I have great hopes, I am now going into the company of good men; yet I would not be too peremptory and confident concering it." Speaking on this ſame ſubject, Cicero ſays: "I will endeavour to explain what you deſire; yet I would not have you depend upon what I ſhall ſay as certain and infallible. But I may gueſs, as other men do, at what ſhall ſeem moſt probable; and further than this I cannot pretend to go."—And, diſcourſing upon the queſtion, whether or not the ſoul be immortal, the ſame orator ſays: "Which of theſe two opinions be true, God only knows; which of them is moſt probable, is a very great queſtion."

If Socrates and Cicero, two of the greateſt and wiſeſt men among the ancients, had their doubts and fears about the immortality of the ſoul, we may fairly conclude, that they knew of no arguments to give them abſolute certainty, in this point. Could the light of nature have communicated certain indubitable knowledge, they never would have expreſſed themſelves, with ſo much

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reſerve and obſcurity. Of theſe philoſophers, ſome believed in the immortality of the ſoul ; but they ever had their doubts and fears. And there were other whole ſects, who denied this doctrine, and believed, that death eternally cloſed the ſcene of man's exiſtence.

Mankind, in general, before the coming of Chriſt, had very obſcure notions of futurity.— Their traditional accounts were very confuſed, and their knowledge of another world mainly conſiſted, in uncertain gueſſes and ſuppoſitions. The doctrine of their Tartarean regions and Elyſian fields, was built on the fables of their poets.— They were, neceſſarily, in the greateſt uncertainty, whether or not this life ended their exiſtence. This doubtful thought muſt continually perplex their minds, and add a keen ſting to all the comforts and pleaſures of life. To the heathen, death carried a moſt terrible and alarming ſound, and was attended with the moſt ſhocking and melancholy conſiderations. The thoughts of futurity would mix with all their entertainments and diverſions, and afflict them in all their purſuits and undertakings. And the ſober and judicious confeſſed, that this was true of them. This made Cicero, the famous Roman orator, ſay, that *death, like the rock of Tantalus, forever hung over their heads.* Thus ſhocking muſt death be to the heathen, who had no ſolid hope of a reſurrection from the grave. And, although there might be ſome profeſſed libertines among them, as there are ſome in a chriſtian land, who might pretend

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to ridicule the thought of being terrified by death; yet it would caſt a damp over all their joys, and leave no preſent gratification free from pain and uneaſineſs. May we not, therefore, conclude, with the greateſt certainty, that mankind greatly needed a particular revelation, to teach them the immortality of the ſoul, the reſurrection of the body, and the ſtate of the virtuous and vicious, in the other world? Were it not for the light of the goſpel, mankind would have remained, in all their confuſion, and doubt, and perplexity, about the next ſtate of exiſtence. How entirely different from heatheniſm, is the ſcene, under the goſpel diſpenſation? What very different apprehenſions of death and eternity may all the true diſciples of Chriſt entertain, when they have ſuch certain knowledge, that death is ſo far from injuring their moſt refined pleaſures, and deſtroying their beſt purſuits, that it puts them into a capacity of enjoying them more perfectly, and opens a door for a more free, full, and uninterrupted enjoyment of them during eternity? The heaven, promiſed to Chriſtians in the goſpel, is totally different from thoſe Elyſian fields, thoſe bleſſed abodes, of which the ancient poets ſung, in ſtrains ſublime. In the heaven of Chriſtians is the preſence of God, diſplayed in all his power and glory. Here is the company of holy angels, and glorified ſpirits, whoſe hearts are attuned to love. Here are pleaſures without alloy; happineſs without any interruption; and here the glory of God raviſhes every heart, inflames every breaſt, and makes the

whole conſummately bleſſed. To underſtand, with clearneſs, this glory, and to enjoy the means of gaining it, was the goſpel preached to men. And notwithſtanding the goſpel is deſpiſed by infidels, yet its hopes and expectations are infinitely ſuperior to thoſe, that are derived from natural religion. " Nature," ſays the learned Prelate, whom we have often quoted, " Nature ſees all her children go down to the grave. All beyond the grave is, to her, one wide waſte, a land of doubt and uncertainty. When ſhe looks into it, ſhe has her doubts and her uncertainty, her hopes and her fears ; and, agitated by the viciſſitude of theſe paſſions, ſhe has no ground whereon to reſt her foot. But how different is the proſpect, which the goſpel opens to view? In the goſpel, we ſee the heavenly Canaan, the New Jeruſalem. In this city of Jehovah, there are manſions, many manſions, to receive them, *who through faith and patient continuing in well doing, ſeek for glory and immortality.* Our glorious Savior has aboliſhed death, and redeemed the *faithful* into the glorious liberties of the ſons of God ; and promiſed, that they ſhall live and reign in his preſence, as long as eternity itſelf ſhall laſt."

But how miſerable is the conſolation of Deiſts! They have no divine inſtructor, no Savior, no certainty of future exiſtence, of a reſurrection from the grave, of eternal felicity. With them all is darkneſs, doubt and perplexity. And to this unhappy ſtate are they reduced, becauſe they reject Jeſus Chriſt, who is *the reſurrection and the life.*

CHAPTER

CHAPTER II.

The evidence in favor of REVEALED RELIGION, *arising from Miracles.*

IT appears, from the preceding chapter, that mankind ſtand in need of a divine revelation. The next inquiry, of courſe, is, whether the Bible, which we have in our hands, contain ſuch a revelation. All muſt acknowledge, who have read the Sacred Volume, that it comes to us under a divine ſignature, and claims to be the Word of God. This claim is not founded upon the bare declaration of the Sacred Writers; but upon the Miracles which were wrought, to prove their divine miſſion. To give this argument in favor of revealed religion its proper force, we ſhall, firſt, fix and determine the nature of miracles; then point out the profeſſed purpoſe, for which they were wrought; and, in the laſt place, make it appear, that they ſufficiently anſwer the end propoſed.

I. We are to explain the nature of miracles. Theſe have been very differently defined by different authors. But without ſpending time to examine their definitions, it may be ſufficient to

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ſay, that *a miracle is an effect, wrought by God himſelf, out of the common courſe of nature.*

Though, in a looſe ſenſe, *men* may be ſaid to work miracles ; yet, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, they are the immediate production of the *Deity*. In this light, they are uniformly repreſented in ſcripture. The miracles of our Savior are expreſſly aſcribed to God. " Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words, Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by *miracles*, and *wonders*, and *ſigns*, which *God* did by him in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know." It is plainly ſaid, that " God wrought ſpecial miracles by the hands of Paul." And it is no leſs plainly ſaid, that God wrought miracles in favor of the other Apoſtles. " How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation ; which at firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ; *God* alſo bearing them witneſs, both with *ſigns* and *wonders*, and with *divers miracles*." Agreeably to theſe repreſentations, thoſe who are ſaid to work miracles diſclaim their *own*, and acknowledge the *divine* agency, in their production. Chriſt, ſpeaking of his own miracles, expreſsly declares, " The *Father*, that dwelleth in me, *he* doeth the works." Peter and John diſclaim the honor of curing the impotent man, and aſcribe it to Him, to whom alone it was juſtly due. " Ye men of Iſrael, why marvel ye at this ? Or why look ye ſo earneſtly on us, as though *by our own power or holineſs* we had made this man to walk ? The God of Abraham and of Iſaac and of Jacob,

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the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jeſus—And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man ſtrong, whom ye ſee and know : Yea the faith which is by him hath given this perfect ſoundneſs in the preſence of you all." The ancient prophets alſo diſclaimed the power of working miracles, and in the ſame manner aſcribed it to God. When Pharaoh ſaid unto Joſeph, I have heard ſay of thee, that thou canſt underſtand a dream, to interpret it ; Joſeph replied, " It is *not* in me : *God* ſhall give Pharaoh an anſwer of peace." And when Nebuchadnezzar ſaid unto Daniel, " Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have ſeen, and the interpretation thereof ? Daniel anſwered in the preſence of the king, and ſaid, There is a *God in heaven* that revealeth ſecrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what ſhall be in the latter days : But *as for me*, this ſecret is not revealed *to me for any wiſdom that I have more than any living*."

The manner in which miracles were produced, further ſhows, that they were wrought by the finger of God. There was no natural connection, between the miracles of Moſes and his own exertions. His throwing down his rod, had no natural tendency to turn it into a ſerpent ; and his taking it up, had no natural tendency to turn it into a rod again. There was no natural connection between the ſound of ram's horns, and the falling of the walls of Jericho. And Eliſha's caſting a ſtick into the water, was no natural efficient cauſe of the young Prophet's ax riſing and

ſwimming upon the ſurface. In all theſe inſtances, the miracles were immediately owing to a divine agency. And the manner, in which Chriſt and the apoſtles wrought miracles, equally diſcovers the immediate hand of God. Our Savior did but ſay to the ſea, *Be ſtill*, and it was ſtill. He did but ſay to the leper, *Be thou clean* ; and immediately the leproſy departed from him. He did but ſay to the young man, whom they were carrying to the grave, *I ſay unto thee ariſe ;* and he that was dead ſat up, and began to ſpeak. He did but ſay to Lazarus, *Come forth ;* and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. Our Lord told his apoſtles, that they might work miracles in the ſame manner, and if they only ſaid, in faith, to this or that mountain, Be thou removed and caſt into the ſea, the miraculous effect ſhould inſtantly follow. Now, this manner of working miracles, by a word's ſpeaking, is a clear evidence, that they were wrought by Him, who ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light ; that is, by God himſelf.—The prophets and apoſtles were only the *occaſion*, and not the *efficient cauſe* of the miracles, which are aſcribed to them. No *natural*, nor even *delegated* power of their own, had the leaſt influence in producing a *miraculous* effect. This was wholly owing to the immediate power and agency of the Deity, who, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in every inſtance, wrought the miracle.

It is, now, time to conſider the laſt branch of our definition, which is, that a miracle muſt be

wrought,

wrought, not only by God himſelf, but out of the common courſe of nature. God has been pleaſed to preſcribe a rule of conduct to himſelf, according to which he commonly operates, in governing the affairs of the world. And ſo long as he acts agreeably to this rule, no effects, which he produces, however great or wonderful, can be properly called miracles. But, whenever he departs from the common courſe of nature, and produces any effect, that effect is really a miracle. Accordingly we find, that all the miracles, which are recorded in ſcripture, were apparently wrought, out of the common courſe of nature. It was out of God's uſual courſe of conduct, to cauſe the Red ſea to divide, roll back, and ſtand ſtill, while his people paſſed over on dry ground. It was out of God's uſual courſe of conduct, to preſerve Daniel in the lion's den, and the three worthies in the burning fiery furnace. And it was contrary to every known law of nature, for Chriſt to cure the lame, heal the ſick, and raiſe the dead, by a word's ſpeaking. Thus, according to ſcripture, a miracle is an effect, wrought by God himſelf, out of the common courſe of nature.

But againſt this definition it may be objected, in the firſt place, that we are not fully acquainted with the laws of nature, and, therefore, we cannot abſolutely determine when God does, or does not, act agreeably to them.

It is true, indeed, we cannot comprehend the utmoſt bounds of nature, and, of conſequence, cannot determine, in all caſes, whether the laws

of nature are ſuperſeded, or not. But it would be very abſurd to infer from this, that there are no plain caſes, in which we can eaſily and clearly determine, that the laws of nature are ſuſpended or counteracted. We often meet with doubtful caſes in ſeeing, hearing, and reaſoning ; but we never infer from theſe, that there are no plain caſes, in which we know, that we ſee and hear and reaſon according to truth. Suppoſing we cannot determine, whether there was any thing contrary to nature, in the cures which were wrought in the pool of Bethesda ; yet, this does not prove, that we cannot determine, that there was ſomething contrary to nature, in God's dividing the Red Sea, and in Chriſt's raiſing the dead to life.— Though we cannot fix the preciſe boundaries of nature ; yet we can determine, in plain caſes, when it is really counteracted. We know, for inſtance, that it is the nature of fire to conſume human bodies ; and, therefore, we know, that nature was controlled, in the preſervation of Shadrach, Meſhach, and Abednego, in the burning fiery furnace. Hence our definition of a miracle is juſt and accurate ; though there may be doubtful caſes, in which it may be difficult to draw the line exactly, between *natural* and *ſupernatural* effects.

But ſtill ſome may ſay, Did not the magicians work miracles ? Did not God ſuppoſe that a prophet or dreamer of dreams might ariſe among his people, and give a ſign or a wonder ? Did not Chriſt foretel the coming of falſe prophets, who

ſhould

ſhould ſhow great ſigns and wonders, ſo as to deceive, were it poſſible, the very elect? And did not John repreſent the Beaſt, which he foretold, as making fire come down from heaven, in the ſight of men, and deceiving the inhabitants of the earth, by the miracles which he performed? Theſe repreſentations ſeem to refute the notion, that none but God can work miracles.

A very few obſervations are ſufficient to remove this plauſible objection.

1. It muſt be allowed, that there is a difference between *true* miracles, and all thoſe things, which only reſemble them. Let any definition be given of a miracle, and it muſt be true, that there is a difference between a miracle, and any thing, which only carries the appearance of it. So that all muſt allow, that there is a difference between *true* and *falſe* miracles; or, in other words, between *real* miracles, and all thoſe things, which only reſemble them. This diſtinction is made in the Bible. Ezekiel declares, concerning the falſe prophets, "They have ſeen vanity and *lying* divination."—And thus appeals to them for the truth of his declaration: "Have ye not ſeen a vain viſion, and have ye not ſpoken a *lying* divination?" Paul, likewiſe, repreſents the Man of Sin as having power to perform ſigns and *lying* wonders, that is, *falſe* miracles. According to ſcripture as well as reaſon, there muſt be a difference between *true* miracles and *falſe*. But,

2. There can be no other diſtinction, between *true* and *falſe* miracles, than this: *True* miracles

are

are wrought by *God*, and *falſe* miracles are wrought by *creatures*. For God to do only that, which any creature can do, is no miracle; becauſe, by doing what creatures are able to do, he does not diſcover his own power, or interpoſition. And to ſuppoſe that creatures can perform miracles, is to ſuppoſe, that there is no real perceptible difference, between a miracle and a common action. For, upon this ſuppoſition, a miracle, as well as a common action, is performed, by that power, which is natural to creatures. And one exertion of mere natural power is no more a miracle than another. Hence, there is nothing that men can do by *their* natural power, which deſerves the name of a miracle. And, for the ſame reaſon, nothing can be called a miracle, which Satan is able to do by *his* natural power. So that no creatures whatever can work miracles. But if no creatures can work miracles, then miracles muſt be ſuch effects as are wrought, by the immediate power and agency of God, out of the uſual courſe of his operation. Accordingly we find, that the ſcripture diſtinguiſhes *true* miracles from *falſe*, by aſcribing *true* miracles to *God* and *falſe* miracles, or lying wonders, to *created agents*. The miracles of Moſes are aſcribed to God; but the miracles of the magicians to their *enchantments*. And the magicians themſelves made the ſame diſtinction.—When lice were produced, they ſaid unto Pharaoh, "*This is the finger of God.*" Paul aſcribes the falſe miracles of the Man of Sin to the agency of Satan. "And then ſhall that Wicked be

revealed—

revealed—whoſe coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and *lying wonders.*" And the apoſtle John aſcribes theſe ſame ſigns and lying wonders to the operation of the devil. " And I ſaw three unclean ſpirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beaſt, and out of the mouth of the falſe prophet. *For they are the ſpirits of devils working miracles.*" Now, if there be a diſtinction between *true* miracles and *falſe ;* and if all miracles and ſigns, which are wrought by wicked men or devils, are *falſe* miracles, or *lying* wonders ; then, it neceſſarily follows, that *all true* miracles are the immediate production of the Deity, or effects, wrought by God himſelf, out of the common courſe of nature. The way is now prepared,

II. To point out the profeſſed purpoſe, for which miracles were wrought. We muſt ſuppoſe, that God had ſome important purpoſe to anſwer, by ſtepping out of the uſual courſe of his operation, and controlling the laws of nature. And if we look into the Bible, we ſhall find that the great deſign, which God expreſsly propoſed, in working miracles, was to *atteſt* the divine miſſion of thoſe, whom he authoriſed to bear his meſſages to mankind. Here we may obſerve,

1. This purpoſe was expreſsly propoſed, at the time when miracles were wrought. God promiſed Moſes and Aaron, that he would atteſt their divine miſſion to Pharaoh, whenever he ſhould call for their credentials. " And the Lord

ſpake

ſpake unto Moſes and Aaron, ſaying, When Pharaoh ſhall ſpeak unto you, ſaying, *Shew a miracle for you ;* then thou ſhalt ſay unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and caſt it before Pharaoh, and it ſhall become a ſerpent." And when God came down upon mount Sinai, with majeſty and great glory, it was to give a clear and ſtriking teſtimony to the divine miſſion of Moſes. " And the Lord ſaid unto Moſes, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, *that* the *people* may hear when I ſpeak with thee, and *believe thee forever.*" After Elijah had publicly profeſſed to be a true prophet, he prayed to God to confirm his profeſſion, by a ſpecial miracle. " And it came to paſs at the time of the offering of the evening ſacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and ſaid, Lord God of Abraham, Iſaac, and of Jacob, let it be known this day that thou art God in Iſrael, and *that I am thy ſervant*, and *that I have done all theſe things at thy word.*" God heard this his requeſt, and *atteſted his divine miſſion*, before all the people, by miraculouſly conſuming the ſacrifice prepared. The miracles of Chriſt are expreſsly ſaid to be atteſtations of his divine authority. " Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words : Jeſus of Nazareth, a man *approved* of *God* among you, by *miracles*, and wonders, and ſigns, which *God* did by him in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know."— When Peter went to Cornelius, he again aſſerted, that God had borne public teſtimony to the divine miſſion of Chriſt, by miracles. " Then Peter opened his mouth and ſaid—The word

which

which God ſent unto the children of Iſrael, preaching peace by Jeſus Chriſt ; he is Lord of all : That word, I ſay, ye know, which was publiſhed throughout all Judea, and began in Galilee, after the baptiſm, which John preached ; How *God* anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt and with power : Who went about doing good, and *healing all that were oppreſſed of the devil : For God was with him.*" And as God atteſted the divine miſſion of Chriſt, by miracles ; ſo Chriſt gave the ſame kind of atteſtation to the divine miſſion of the apoſtles. " And he ſaid unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature. So then after the Lord had ſpoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and ſat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, *the Lord working with them*, and *confirming the word with ſigns following.*" With this agrees the account given of Paul and Barnabas, while they continued at Iconium. " Long time therefore abode they, ſpeaking boldly in the Lord, *who gave teſtimony* unto the word of his grace, and *granted ſigns* and *wonders* to be done by their hands."— Hence it appears, that the profeſſed purpoſe, for which miracles were wrought, under both the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſation, was to atteſt the diviue miſſion of thoſe, whom God authoriſed to reveal his will to the children of men.— And this leads us to obſerve,

2. That the prophets, Chriſt, and the apoſtles, appealed to miracles, as the higheſt credentials of

 their

their divine miſſion. We have already ſeen, that Moſes and Elijah appealed to miracles, to prove that they were ſent of God, to reveal his will and plead his cauſe. Our Savior likewiſe appealed to his miracles, as the higheſt credentials of his mediatorial character and conduct. When John ſent two of his diſciples to Jeſus, to inquire whether he was the promiſed Meſſiah; inſtead of ſaying in ſo many words, that he was the Chriſt, he referred them to his miracles, as the higheſt proof of it. "And John calling unto him two of his diſciples, ſent them to Jeſus, ſaying, Art thou he that ſhould come? Or look we for another? Then Jeſus anſwering ſaid unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have ſeen and heard, how that the blind ſee, the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed, to the poor the goſpel is preached." When the ſcribes ſcrupled his authority to forgive ſins, he wrought a miracle to prove it. "And Jeſus, knowing their thoughts, ſaid, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is eaſier? to ſay, Thy ſins be forgiven thee; or to ſay, Ariſe, and walk? But *that ye may know* that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive ſins, (then ſaith he to the ſick of the palſy) Ariſe take up thy bed, and go unto thine houſe. And he aroſe and departed unto his houſe. But when the multitudes ſaw it they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given ſuch power unto men. When the Jews accuſed him of blaſphemy, for claiming to be the Son of God, he appealed to his miracles

to prove the propriety of his claim. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.—But if I do, though ye believe not me, *believe the works.*" And to confirm the ſame truth, he ſaid again to the Jews; "Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: Or elſe believe me *for the very works' ſake.*" Upon the occaſion of his curing the impotent man on the Sabbath, he once more vindicated his divine authority and miſſion, by appealing firſt to the teſtimony of John, and then to the teſtimony of his miracles. "But I have greater witneſs than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do bear witneſs of me, *that the Father hath ſent me.*" Peter and John appealed to a miracle wrought in their favor, to confirm the divine authority, by which they preached the goſpel, and acted in the name of Chriſt. "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghoſt, ſaid unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Iſrael, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Iſrael, that by the name of Jeſus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raiſed from the dead, even by him doth this man ſtand before you whole." When this ſtopped the mouths of their adverſaries, who durſt only threaten them, they took courage, and prayed, that the teſtimony of miracles might ſtill attend their preaching. "Now, Lord, behold their *threatenings*: And grant unto thy ſervants

that

that with all boldneſs they may ſpeak thy word, *by ſtretching forth thine hand to heal ;* and that *ſigns* and *wonders may be done by thy holy child Jeſus.* Paul, the laſt of the apoſtles, appealed once and again to his miracles, as the infallible evidence of his apoſtleſhip, which was frequently called in queſtion. To the Romans he ſays, "I will not dare to ſpeak of any of thoſe things which Chriſt hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through *mighty ſigns* and *wonders*, by the power of the Spirit of God ; ſo that from Jeruſalem and round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached the goſpel of Chriſt." And to convince the Corinthians of the reality of his divine miſſion, he was obliged to appeal to his miracles, the proper and acknowledged ſigns of an apoſtle. "I am become a fool in glorying : Ye have compelled me : For I ought to have been commended of you : For in nothing am I behind the very chiefeſt apoſtles, though I am nothing. *Truly the ſigns of an apoſtle* were wrought among you in all patience, in *ſigns*, and *wonders*, and *mighty deeds.*"

It is now ſufficiently evident, we truſt, that miracles were wrought for the profeſſed purpoſe of proving the divine miſſion of thoſe, whom God ſent to reveal his will to the children of men.—This appears from the plain declarations of ſcripture, and from the conduct of the prophets, of Chriſt, and of the apoſtles, who conſtantly appealed to miracles, as the higheſt credentials of their divine miſſion and authority, to ſpeak and

act

act in the name of the living and true God. It only remains to make it appear,

III. That miracles anſwer the end for which they were deſigned.

What we mean by this propoſition is, that miracles carry ſuch evidence of the truth and divinity of the Scriptures, as ought to convince us, that they are the Word of God. It is true, the evidence of miracles, as well as any other external evidence of the inſpiration of the Scriptures, may be diſregarded, and of conſequence diſbelieved. It is not pretended, therefore, that miracles give irreſiſtible evidence of revealed religion ; but only ſuch evidence as is ſufficient to convince every one, who examines it with attention and candor. But before we proceed to illuſtrate this point, it ſeems neceſſary to meet the enemies of divine revelation in the threſhold, and to premiſe, that the miracles which are recorded in ſcripture are as *credible*, or worthy to be believed, as any other *facts*, which are related in the Bible, or in any other ancient hiſtory. They were addreſſed to men's eyes, and ears, and underſtandings. They were performed in the face of day, in the moſt public places, and in the moſt public manner.—And they were of ſuch an uncommon and extraordinary nature, as to excite the curioſity and attention of both friends and foes. Theſe circumſtances put it into the power of the ſpectators to examine their reality. The miracles of Moſes were exhibited before the king, and court, and wiſe men, of Egypt ; which gave them the fair-

eſt opportunity of ſatisfying themſelves, whether they were realities, or mere deluſions. The miracle of Elijah was wrought before the prophets, and prieſts, and people of Iſrael, who, with one conſent and with a loud voice, proclaimed their belief of the fact. The miracles, which were wrought in favor of Daniel and the three worthies, were exhibited in the moſt public manner, and before vaſt multitudes of ſpectators. Our Savior's miracles were performed on public and ſolemn occaſions, and in the preſence of friends and enemies. He raiſed Lazarus and the widow's ſon from the dead, before large collections of people. And Peter cured the impotent man at the gate of the temple, in the midſt of the rulers and people of Iſrael. And in all theſe inſtances, the beholders were conſtrained to acknowledge the reality of the miracles. Beſides, there was another circumſtance, which greatly increaſed the credibility of the miracles that are recorded in the Bible. They were never wrought on ſlight and trivial occaſions, but only when ſome end, worthy of the Deity, required his immediate interpoſition and exertion. By leaving out this ſingle circumſtance, a late writer has endeavored to deſtroy the importance, and conſequently the credibility of miracles. He has this ſhrewd remark: "Suppoſe I were to ſay, that when I ſat down to write this book, a hand preſented itſelf in the air, took up the pen and wrote every word that is herein written; would any body believe me? Certainly they would not." It is granted they would not believe

him;

him ; and for this plain reaſon, the occaſion did not require the interpoſition of the Deity. But this cannot be ſaid in reſpect to the miracles, which are recorded in ſcripture. They were wrought on important occaſions, which required the interpoſition of the immediate hand of heaven. It was highly becoming the Supreme Being to atteſt the divine miſſion of Moſes and the prophets, of Chriſt and the apoſtles, whom he ſent to accompliſh the moſt intereſting and important deſigns. This conſideration gives a credibility to ſcripture miracles, which cannot be found in the ſtrange and wonderful things related by profane authors. And notwithſtanding ſome weak and ſuperficial writers, in favor of infidelity, have called in queſtion the exiſtence of the miracles, which are recorded in the Bible ; yet Joſephus, Celſus, and Julian, the moſt learned and bitter enemies of the Chriſtian religion, have frankly acknowledged their truth and reality. We may rely upon it, therefore, that the miracles, which are related in ſcripture, did actually exiſt. This being premiſed, we proceed to obſerve,

1. The miracles of the prophets, of Chriſt, and of the apoſtles, carried as much evidence of their divine miſſion, as mankind ever required.—Pharaoh required no higher evidence, that Moſes came from God, than his working miracles. It ſeems to have been a given point with the people of Iſrael, that if Elijah wrought a real miracle, he was the true prophet of the Lord. And the Jews in general expected the Meſſiah, when he

came,

came, would exhibit no higher evidence of his divine miſſion, than that of miracles. This they acknowledged on a certain occaſion, by ſaying, "When Chriſt cometh, will he do more miracles than theſe which this man hath done?" Beſides, his enemies frequently deſired and required him to produce the teſtimony of miracles, in favor of his divine miſſion and authority. Once they ſaid, "What *ſign* ſheweſt thou, that we may ſee, and believe thee?" Once they ſaid, "Maſter, we would ſee a *ſign* from thee." And they repeatedly deſired him, "that he would ſhew them a *ſign* from heaven." Men had a right to expect and require this evidence of the divine miſſion of the prophets, Chriſt, and the apoſtles; and when they exhibited this evidence in their favor, every perſon ought to have been entirely ſatisfied with it. It is, therefore, the dictate of common ſenſe, that thoſe divine teachers gave clear and ſufficient evidence of their divine miſſion, by the miracles which they wrought.

2. Their miracles actually convinced many of their divine miſſion. The Jewiſh nation in general were convinced, "*that God ſpake unto Moſes.*" Many individuals believed, that Chriſt was ſent of God. His firſt miracle "manifeſted forth his glory, and his diſciples *believed on him.* While he attended the paſſover at Jeruſalem, "*many believed in his name, when they ſaw the miracles which he did.*" His miracles convinced Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, of his divine miſſion. "Rabbi, ſays he, we know that thou art a teacher come

from

from God : *For no man can do theſe miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him.*" His giving ſight to the man born blind raiſed a diſpute about the evidence of miracles, and finally diſcovered the conviction, which that miracle carried to the minds of the candid. " Therefore ſaid ſome of the Phariſees; This man is not of God, becauſe he keepeth not the Sabbath day. Others ſaid, How can a man that is a ſinner do ſuch miracles ? And there was a diviſion among them. They ſay unto the blind man again, What ſayeſt thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes ? He ſaid, *He is a* prophet. Then ſaid they unto him, Give God the praiſe ; we know that this man is a ſinner.— He anſwered and ſaid, Whether he be a ſinner or no, I know not : One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I ſee. Then ſaid they to him again, What did he to thee ? How opened he thine eyes ? He anſwered them, I have told you alreadỳ, and ye did not hear : Wherefore would you hear it again ? Will ye alſo be his diſciples ? Then they reviled him and ſaid, *Thou* art his diſciple ; but we are Moſes's diſciples. We know that God ſpake unto Moſes : As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man anſwered and ſaid unto them, Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind. *If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*" Chriſt raiſed Lazarus from the grave, after he had been

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dead four days, with a view to make men believe his divine miſſion, and he actually accompliſhed his purpoſe. The account is this : " Then they took away the ſtone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jeſus lifted up his eyes, and ſaid, Father, I thank thee that thou haſt heard me.— And I know that thou heareſt me always : But becauſe of the people which ſtand by, I ſaid it, *that they may believe that thou haſt ſent me.* And when he had thus ſpoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes : And his face was bound about with a napkin. Jeſus ſaith unto them, Looſe him, and let him go. Then *many* of the Jews which came to Mary, and had ſeen the things which Jeſus did, *believed on him.* But ſome of them went their ways to the Phariſees, and told them what things Jeſus had done. Then gathered the chief prieſts and the Phariſees a council, and ſaid, *What do we ? For this man doth many miracles.* If we let him thus alone, *all men will believe on him :* And the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." The miracles of the apoſtles carried equal conviction to the ſpectators, who were equally prejudiced againſt them. The Jewiſh council, who arraigned Peter and John before them, for healing the man lame from his mother's womb, were fully convinced of their divine miſſion, by the evidence of that miracle. " Now when they ſaw the boldneſs of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and igno-

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rant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.—And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, *they could say nothing against it.*—But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do with these men? For that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them *is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.*" There is another instance of the convincing evidence of miracles, which is related in the eighth of Acts. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the *miracles* which he did. Then Simon himself *believed* also: And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the *miracles* and *signs* which were done." It appears from these facts, that the miracles of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles, did actually convince, both friends and foes, that they were teachers come from God.

3. Their miracles carried such evidence of their divine authority, as none of their powerful and subtil enemies could gainsay or destroy. Men of corrupt minds used all their power and art to destroy their credentials; but they were unable to accomplish their malignant purpose. The magicians, at first, confronted the miracles of Moses, with their enchantments; but they were finally constrained to acknowledge the finger of God in

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favor of the prophet. The prophets of Baal attempted to deſtroy the authority of Elijah ; but the miracle, which they labored in vain to produce, and which he actually wrought, completely deſtroyed their credit, and eſtabliſhed his own.—The miracles of Chriſt put to ſilence both men and devils. And though ſome preſumed to imitate the miracles of the apoſtles ; yet they met with that ſhame, reproach, and diſappointment, which they juſtly deſerved. Let us read the account. " And God wrought ſpecial miracles by the hands of Paul ; ſo that from his body were brought unto the ſick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diſeaſes departed from them, and the evil ſpirits went out of them. Then, certain of the vagabond Jews, exorciſts, took upon them to call over them which had evil ſpirits, the name of the Lord Jeſus, ſaying, We adjure you by Jeſus whom Paul preacheth. And there were ſeven ſons of one Sceva a Jew, and chief of the prieſts, which did ſo. And the evil ſpirit anſwered and ſaid, Jeſus I know, and Paul I know ; but who are ye ? And the man in whom the evil ſpirit was, leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed againſt them, ſo that they fled out of the houſe naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks alſo dwelling at Epheſus : And fear fell on them all ; and the name of the Lord was magnified. And *many that believed* came and *confeſſed*, and *ſhewed their deeds*. Many alſo of them which uſed curious arts brought *their books* together, and *burned them* before all men ;

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and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thouſand pieces of ſilver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed." Thus effectually did miracles anſwer the purpoſe for which they were wrought. They triumphed over all oppoſition; expoſed the deluſions of Satan; and conſtrained even diviners and ſorcerers, to believe the truth and divinity of the goſpel.

4. Miracles pledge the *divine veracity*; and therefore infallibly prove the divine miſſion of thoſe, in whoſe favor they are wrought. We have ſhewn, that they are produced by the *finger of God*, and for the *profeſſed purpoſe* of confirming the divine miſſion of thoſe, whom he authoriſes to reveal his will. Hence miracles have the nature of a *teſtimony*, and do actually pledge the *divine veracity*. God aſſured Moſes, when he ſent him to Pharaoh, that he would confirm his miſſion, by miracles. And Chriſt gave the ſame aſſurance to his diſciples, when he ſent them to preach the goſpel. "Then he called his twelve diſciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diſeaſes. And he ſent them to preach the kingdom of God, and *to heal the ſick*." All the true prophets and apoſtles had the promiſe of God, that he would work miracles, to manifeſt to the world, that he ſent them. Accordingly, they had a right to call upon God to work miracles, to confirm their divine miſſion. This right Elijah exerciſed, when Ahaziah ſent a band of ſoldiers to apprehend him. "Then the king ſent unto him a captain of fifty, with his fifty.

And he went up to him. And behold he ſat on the top of an hill. And he ſpake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath ſaid, Come down.—And Elijah anſwered, and ſaid to the captain of fifty, *If I be a man of God*, then let fire come down from heaven, and conſume thee and thy fifty. And there came fire from heaven, and conſumed him and his fifty." Elijah called upon God to fulfil his promiſe, and confirm his miſſion.—This miracle was the fulfilment of God's promiſe, and pledged his veracity, that Elijah was his prophet. Juſt ſo, when God wrought a miracle in favor of any prophet or apoſtle, he ſaid, by his conduct, which ſpake louder than words, "*This is my ſervant ; hear ye him.*" Hence, God is ſaid to *bear witneſs* to the divine miſſion of Chriſt and of the apoſtles, by giving them his own teſtimony of miracles. Chriſt ſays, "I have greater *witneſs* than that of John : For the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear *witneſs* of me, that *the Father hath ſent me*. And the Father himſelf, which hath ſent me, hath borne *witneſs* of me." And of the apoſtles it is ſaid, that "God did bear them *witneſs*, both with *ſigns* and *wonders*, and with *divers miracles*." A witneſs pledges his veracity. And when God witneſſed the divine miſſion of Chriſt and of the apoſtles, he pledged his own veracity. Hence the evidence of miracles is the moſt plain, obvious, and infallible proof of the divine miſſion of the prophets, of Chriſt, and of the apoſtles, that an infinitely wiſe and powerful and faithful

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God could give to them, and to thoſe to whom they were ſent. It is now neceſſary to obſerve, once more,

5. That this infallible proof of revealed religion is perpetual, and juſtly claims the belief of all, who enjoy the Bible. Some, who ſeem to allow, that miracles might be a temporary proof of revealed religion; yet, deny that they can be a ſtanding evidence of divine revelation. A late retailer of infidelity preſumes to ſay, "A miracle could be but a thing of the moment, and ſeen but by a few; after this, it requires a transfer of faith from God to man, to believe a miracle upon man's report. Inſtead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles, as evidence of any ſyſtem of religion being true, they ought to be conſidered as ſymptoms of its being fabulous." This repreſentation is extremely unjuſt and fallacious; becauſe it confounds ideas, which ought to be kept entirely diſtinct. The exiſtence of miracles is one thing; and the evidence, which their exiſtence affords, in favor of revealed religion, is another. Our belief, that miracles did really exiſt, muſt depend upon *human teſtimony;* but our belief, that they prove a divine miſſion, muſt depend upon *divine teſtimony.* We muſt believe the reality of miracles, upon the report of thoſe, who ſaw them performed; and they believed the exiſtence of the miracles, which they ſaw performed, upon the teſtimony of their own eyes, and ears, and other ſenſes. The belief of the exiſtence of miracles, in both theſe caſes, is wholly

founded upon *human teſtimony*, without any tranſfer of faith, from God to man. Now, this being true, it is eaſy to ſee, that miracles afford *us* preciſely the ſame evidence of a divine miſſion, that they afforded the ſpectators themſelves. The ſacred writers have told us what miracles were wrought in favor of the prophets, of Chriſt, and of the apoſtles; and now we have a juſt right and fair opportunity to judge, whether thoſe miracles did really prove their divine miſſion. The miracles, which were wrought in favor of Moſes, give us the ſame evidence of his being ſent of God, that they gave to Pharaoh, and others, who ſaw them. The miracles, which were wrought in favor of Chriſt, give us the ſame evidence of his being the promiſed Meſſiah, and Savior of the world, that they gave to the apoſtles, and the reſt of the ſpectators of them. And the miracles, which were wrought in favour of the apoſtles, give us the ſame evidence of their divine miſſion, that they gave to thoſe, before whom they were actually wrought. Hence, if Pharaoh ought to believe the divine miſſion of Moſes; then, we ought to believe it. If the Jews ought to believe the divine miſſion of Chriſt; then, we ought to believe it. And if the Gentiles ought to believe the divine miſſion of the apoſtles; then, we ought to believe it. The diſtance of time and place does not diminiſh the divine teſtimony of miracles, in favor of revealed religion. It comes to us, atteſted by the finger of God; and thoſe, who diſbelieve it, we have no reaſon to think, would

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be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.

CHAPTER III.

The Evidence in Favor of REVEALED RELIGION, *ariſing from* PROPHECY *and its fulfilment.*

IN compaſſion to the ſons of men, the Divine Being has been pleaſed to give them a religion, ſuch as their circumſtances required, and calculated to make them happy, in this and the coming world. And he has been pleaſed ſo to authenticate this religion as to ſtrike conviction into the mind of every man, who exerciſes the ſmalleſt degree of candor and impartiality. As a belief in divine revelation is not demanded, but on the moſt rational principles; ſo God has not only taught men their need of a religion from heaven, and its importance to them; but he has alſo given the moſt ſubſtantial evidence of its being divine. Its ſpirituality and tendency, and the miracles wrought in its confirmation, are proofs ſufficient to bow the minds of all, who ſhut not their eyes againſt the light.

For our conſolation, however, and to furniſh us with arguments againſt infidelity, we have a

ſure word of prophecy, which confirms our faith, and animates our hearts with vigor and joy.

Prophecy may well be conſidered as a main pillar, in the Chriſtian edifice ; as a chief corner ſtone, which ſupports the building, againſt the attacks and ſtorms of infidels. If holy men have been inſpired, by God, to predict future events, and if the events have taken place according to the predictions, then, that the religion eſtabliſhed by their miniſtry is of divine original, is a plain, indiſputable, conſequence.

To propheſy is to foretel future events, the knowledge of which is communicated to the prophet, by the omniſcient God, who alone ſees through cauſes and effects, and can certainly tell what will happen. Men may form conjectures and ſuppoſitions, about futurity, but they amount to no certain concluſive evidence. Events may, or may not, take place, as they have conjectured. But with God there is no uncertainty, there is no conjecture. He perfectly knows what he is about to do, and what will be the future actions of all moral dependent beings, and what cauſes will produce certain effects ; and, of courſe, he can eaſily foretell, not only the great revolutions in kingdoms and ſtates, but all the future minute circumſtances, reſpecting individuals.

That the ſpirit of prophecy may be given to men, is a rational ſuppoſition. For God, none will deny, can eaſily impreſs the human mind with knowledge. By viſions, dreams, or particular repreſentations, he can ſo teach men, as to make

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them fully acquainted with future things. As God perfectly foreſees all things, which are to take place, as well as comprehends every thing paſt, or preſent; ſo he can reveal to others any events, reſpecting particular perſons, or kingdoms.

In all ages, and among all nations, it has been a received maxim, that the Deity may reveal ſecret and future things, by ſigns, voices, dreams viſions, and external repreſentations. The great variety of auguries, divinations, and conſulting of oracles, that have been, uniformly practiſed among the heathen, eſtabliſhes this point, beyond any diſpute. In conſulting their oracles, and divining by the flight of birds, the entrails of beaſts, and the prodigies of heaven, the heathen acted upon the principle, that the Supreme Ruler could converſe with men by voices, or certain repreſentations, and impreſs on their minds the knowledge of futurity.

The heathen made great dependence on their auguries and divinations. In all their undertakings, eſpecially important ones, they conſulted the gods, and believed in the anſwers they received. Theſe anſwers, however, were clouded with ambiguity, and often proved fallacious. Of this nature was the anſwer, which Pyrrhus received, when preparing to fight the Romans. He conſulted the oracle about his ſucceſs, and received this ambiguous anſwer: "Dico, Æacide, Romanos te vincere poſſe." Which may be tranſlated, "I tell you, Pyrrhus, that you can conquer the Romans."

Romans." Or it may be thus tranſlated, "I tell you, Pyrrhus, that the Romans can conquer you."

The exiſtence of divination among the heathen, although ſpurious, is an argument in favor of a true revelation from heaven. For it would never have entered the minds of the heathen to conſult their gods, in the manner they did, except they had received, from ſure tradition, that the true God had, in the firſt ages of the world, communicated to men a knowledge of his will and pleaſure, by dreams, viſions, and prophetic ſigns.—Men's believing in a falſe religion is evidence of there being a true religion. Were there no true money current among men, no counterfeit coin could poſſibly exiſt. An impoſter is ever ſubſtituted in the room of a true perſon. A falſe prophet is ever admitted upon the principle, that he is a true prophet. And ſo falſe divinations are proof, that the true God can reveal himſelf, and has revealed himſelf, to men. The creation and preſervation of the world, ſimply conſidered, afford no certain evidence, that men, in any age, have received inſtruction from heaven, by a particular revelation. The Deity muſt firſt converſe with men, with an audible voice, or impreſs certain truths on their minds, by dreams, viſions, or prophetic repreſentations, before they would believe in any kind of prophecy whatever. But when a true prophecy has been, once, given, it is eaſy to conceive, that falſe prophecies may have an exiſtence. Knowing, that God had, once, or repeatedly,

edly, revealed himſelf, impoſters might eaſily feign themſelves to be his true prophets, and idolators might be induced to aſcribe a power to their fictitious gods, which had been exerted by the true God.

Whatever information of God, and of moral duties, may ariſe, from contemplating the works of creation and providence, it is very plain, that poſitive duties can be known only by a particular revelation. That God is, and that he is to be worſhipped by men, is plain, from the light of nature. But the manner of this worſhip, and a great variety of poſitive duties, muſt, neceſſarily, depend on expreſs revelation.

And, accordingly, God, as we hope to make evident, has often endued men with the ſpirit of prophecy, and expreſsly taught his moral creatures the great truths of religion. The religion, given by Moſes, was entirely built on communications of the will and pleaſure of God, to Abraham and his poſterity. God was pleaſed to eſtabliſh, among them, his holy oracles, which they might conſult for their direction and comfort ; and from which they received plain and unequivocal anſwers. To ſtrengthen their faith, and animate their hopes, God raiſed up a ſucceſſion of prophets, who, from time to time, predicted events, the moſt aſtoniſhing and moſt unlikely to happen, and which nearly concerned the proſperity of Iſrael. God alſo manifeſted to their view many future events, relating to the whole world, in general, or to nations, in particular.

Noah was taught, by the ſpirit of prophecy, that the whole world would be deſtroyed, by a deluge of waters. Abraham was informed, that his poſterity would be ſervants in a ſtrange land; that they would be afflicted and oppreſſed by a cruel nation, and that, in a limited time, they would be redeemed from ſervitude, and be brought to inherit the land of promiſe. Saul was notified, by the prophet Samuel, that his kingdom *ſhould not continue*. The revolt of ten tribes from the houſe of Solomon, and their ſubmiſſion to Jeroboam, were foretold, by Ahijah, the Shilonite. The deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of the Jews, for ſeventy years, in Babylon, was predicted by Jeremiah.—That Cyrus, the king of Perſia, would take Babylon, and redeem the people of God from captivity, and aſſiſt them in rebuilding the temple, and the city Jeruſalem, was foretold by the prophet Iſaiah, above an hundred years before the events took place. Many prophets uttered predictions about the appearing of God's Son, in this world, to eſtabliſh a kingdom of righteouſneſs, and to die for the ſalvation of men. His perſon, character, miſſion, birth, ſufferings, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, were minutely deſcribed, many hundred years before the incarnation. And the prophet Daniel mentioned the exact time, when the Meſſiah would come from heaven, to make reconciliation for tranſgreſſors.

As the preaching of Chriſt and his apoſtles made a moſt ſurpriſing alteration, in the moral ſtate of

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the world; ſo the friends of piety and virtue ſtood not in need of ſuch frequent admonitions and predictions, from heaven, as were given to the ancient ſaints. And yet the New Teſtament is not wholly deſtitute of prophecies. Jeſus Chriſt predicted his own death, and many circumſtances relating to it. As God was determined to reject the poſterity of Abraham, for their infidelity and wickedneſs, and to gather the Gentiles into the true church; ſo Chriſt gave the Jews information of this event, awful to them, and glorious to the heathen world. Chriſt predicted the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by the Romans, and the ſigns and prodigies, that would attend this dreadful calamity. A great and general apoſtaſy from the chriſtian faith was predicted, by all the apoſtles. Paul, in a particular manner, deſcribes *the man of ſin*, his impiety, and blaſphemy, his ſigns, and lying wonders, and how he is to be deſtroyed. The New Teſtament is cloſed with a prophecy, unfolding to view a ſurpriſing ſeries of moſt important and extraordinary events, relating to the chriſtian church, the Roman empire, and other nations of the world, as far as the affairs of the world have any connection with the church of Chriſt.—The prophecies, in this book, are more various and extenſive, than any other, in the Bible.—They extend from the time of John's being in Patmos, through all ſucceeding ages, to the final conſummation of all things. They not only mention the moſt remarkable revolutions among nations, and kingdoms, and in the chriſtian

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church ; but they deſcribe, with great preciſion, the exact times, when ſome of the moſt important events were to begin, and their continuance.

Againſt theſe prophecies, however, unbelievers are ready to raiſe objections, and ſay, *that the books were written after the events took place.* But, that the prophets, whoſe names and prophecies are recorded in the Bible, lived and propheſied, at ſuch and ſuch times, there is as much evidence as the nature of the caſe will admit. That Moſes led the Iſraelites from Egypt, and conducted them through the deſerts of Arabia, are facts, as well authenticated, as that Manetho wrote the hiſtory of Egypt. Moſes was a famous lawgiver ; and ſo were Lycurgus, Solon, and Minos. And, that Moſes gave laws to the Iſraelites, we have as much evidence, as that Minos gave laws to the Cretans, or Solon to the Athenians, or Lycurgus to the Spartans. Infidels give full credit to the hiſtories and writings, that deſcribe the laws and actions of theſe heathen legiſlators, and yet exert themſelves to diſcredit the character, laws, and writings of Moſes. On what evidence, it may be aſked, do infidels believe, that theſe heathen legiſlators lived, and promulgated laws ? We have their writings, it will be ſaid, handed down to us, through the revolutions of ages, and authenticated by the beſt hiſtorians of antiquity. And have we not the writings and laws of Moſes, tranſmited to us, as ſafely and as purely ? Have we not heathen writers, of undoubted character, to witneſs, that ſuch a perſon as Moſes redeemed the Iſ-

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raelites from Egyptian bondage, and gave them a code of laws ?

The poſterity of Abraham have, ever, been tenacious of their religious rites and ceremonies, and, with the greateſt care, have they preſerved the ſacred books of their great men. The writings of Moſes, of Samuel, of David, of Iſaiah, and the other prophets, were, ever, preſerved, in the archives of the tabernacle and temple, as long as the nation continued together in a diſtinct body. Theſe writings are not of a late date.—They were in being, more than ſeventeen hundred years ago, when Titus deſtroyed Jeruſalem : For they are particularly mentioned by Joſephus, who wrote an hiſtory of this war, which he ſhewed to Veſpaſian and Titus, and received their approbation. Theſe books were in being in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt : For, by his order, they were tranſlated from the original Hebrew into the Greek language, and depoſited in his famous library, in Alexandria. They were in being, when Alexander, the Grecian hero, conquered the Aſiatic nations : For, when he appeared before Jeruſalem, with his army, Jaddua, the high prieſt, met him, in his pontifical robes, and ſhewed him the writings of the prophets.

That the penmen of the ſcriptures are coeval with the moſt noted hiſtorians of heathen antiquity, is evident, from the laſt mentioned authors. In Herodotus, we have an account of the famous expedition of Xerxes, againſt the Grecians, as Daniel has deſcribed it. According to Xenophon,

Belſhazzar, king of Babylon, was ſlain, as Daniel had predicted. The victories of Nebuchadnezzar, over the Egyptians and Iſraelites, and the carrying away of the holy veſſels, and the people of God to Babylon, are noted by heathen hiſtorians to have happened, as predicted by Iſaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. The death of Joſiah, on the plains of Megiddo; the taking of Ninevah, by Aſtyages; the conquering of the Babylonian empire, by the Medes and Perſians; the deſtruction of Sennacherib and his army; the actions of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia; and the deſtruction of the Syrian monarchy, by Tiglath Pileſer, are mentioned, by the moſt celebrated authors of heathen antiquity, to have taken place, as the prophets of the true God had predicted, or as deſcribed by writers in their days. An ancient monument has been found, near the Straits of Gibraltar, on the African ſhore, with this inſcription, "*We are they, who fled from Joſhua, the robber.*"* The actions of Gideon, who ſlew the Midianites, are mentioned by Sanchoniathon, a Tyrian writer, whoſe antiquity is atteſted even by Porphyry, a moſt bitter enemy to Chriſtianity.—Manetho has written a particular account of the time, the manner, and many principal circumſtances, of Moſes' conducting the children of Iſrael from Egypt, through the wilderneſs. Manetho, it is well known, is one of the oldeſt hiſtorians among the heathen. Numenius, a Pythagorean philoſopher, has informed us, how Jannes and

* See Dr. Stiles' Election Sermon.

and Jambres were choſen to oppoſe Moſes, and hinder the effects of his miracles and prayers, which had brought down many dreadful calamities upon Egypt, at the time the Iſraelites were preparing to leave the country.† The moſt famous writers, among the heathen, have acknowledged Moſes, as one of the firſt and greateſt lawgivers, that ever appeared in the world. To ſupport this, we have the united teſtimonies of Plato, Polemus, Artapamus, Pythagoras, Theopompus, and Diodorus Siculus.

Such evidence, one would think, is enough to ſilence incredulity itſelf, and make Deiſts aſhamed of aſſerting, *that the predictions, in the Bible were written after the events took place.* If theſe gentlemen are verſed in ancient hiſtory, they muſt know, that the moſt celebrated authors, of the higheſt antiquity, have, either expreſsly, or incidentally, mentioned the poſterity of Abraham, and the principal circumſtances of their hiſtory, from the days of Moſes, to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by the Romans. If they are unacquainted with ancient hiſtory, they are very unſuitable perſons to make any remarks upon the ſubject, and their reflections, of courſe, deſerve no credit. If they underſtand what ancient writers, whoſe authority cannot be diſputed, have ſaid, about the antiquity of the Iſraelitiſh nation, their laws, cuſ-

toms,

† If the reader wiſhes to ſee a more particular account of the concurrent teſtimony of heathen authors, he may conſult Dr. P. Allix's Reflections on the books of the Holy Scriptures.

toms, religion, wars, judges, kings, and revolutions, and yet would diſguiſe the truth, by ſaying, *that the prophecies were written after the events took place*, we are conſtrained to view them as bold, impudent, aſſertors of what they know to be falſe. And are ſuch men qualified to inſtruct the world? Men, whoſe effrontery will lead them to riſe up againſt the concurrent teſtimony of both ſacred and profane hiſtory, and palm that upon the world for truth, which they know, in their own conſciences, to be deſtitute of even the ſhadow of truth.

That the Sacred Books are forgeries, originated by politicians and eccleſiaſtics, to impoſe on the common people, is an objection, which often drops from the pens of deiſtical writers. To invalidate the divine authority of the Bible is the apparent deſign of this objection. For, if the Sacred Books are forgeries, if they were written poſterior to the events recorded, in them; then, the argument ariſing from prophecy, and its completion, is overthrown; and we ſhall, of conſequence, have no proof, that God has ever given a revelation of himſelf to men. But what is the evidence, that theſe books are forgeries? It is certain, that no evidence can be gained from profane hiſtory. For the united teſtimony of heathen antiquity is directly againſt the aſſertion. And to ſuppoſe, that any man, or ſet of men, after the days of Moſes, or David, or Solomon, or Chriſt, or the apoſtles, wrote theſe books, and impoſed them on the world, and that the world have agreed to admit

mit them as genuine, is the moſt abſurd ſuppoſition, that was ever made. Suppoſing, for inſtance, that Dr. Gordon, in his hiſtory of America, had aſſerted that the Americans were deſcendants from the Turks, in Aſia, that they emigrated about four hundred years ago, that they were profeſſors of the Mahometan religion, and that they were ſubject to a kingly government, would his aſſertions gain the leaſt degree of credit? Would not the preſent and future generations of Americans ſay, that this part of his hiſtory was deſtitute of truth? And, for ſimilar reaſons, it would have been ſaid, that the five books of Moſes were deſtitute of truth, if any man, or ſet of men, among the Iſraelites, or in the chriſtian church, at any period whatever, had written and publiſhed them to the Iſraelites, or any other nation, upon ſuppoſition no ſuch actions, as they relate, had ever exiſted. The forgery, at the firſt publication, would have been evident to all ſorts of perſons, and they would have united to reject the books, as an impoſition on their ſenſes. Had the children of Iſrael never been in Egypt, had no ſuch ſigns and wonders been wrought, in Egypt and in the wilderneſs, neither Moſes, nor any other perſon, could have perſuaded that nation, at any time whatever, to receive the account as genuine. Suppoſing the books of Moſes, of Joſhua, and the kings, had been written by Ezra, or any ſcribe, during the ſecond temple, and the ſubject matter of theſe books had been entirely new to the people, they would have riſen up,

as one man, againſt receiving the narration as authentic ; neither would the people, at any time after, have agreed to admit the books as containing a faithful hiſtory of their nation. It is a fact, however, which cannot be denied, that the Jews, in all periods, have acknowledged theſe books, as being true. They have always conſidered them as ſacred, and kept them as a truſt of the greateſt importance.

Similar remarks will apply to prove, that neither the writings of the prophets, nor of the evangeliſts and apoſtles, are forgeries. So many and ſo forcible are the reaſons to eſtabliſh the fact, that the books of the Old and New Teſtament were written, by the perſons, whoſe names they bear, that every impartial mind will immediately aſſent to the belief. With as much propriety may we ſay, that Xenophon did not write the life of Cyrus, as that Moſes did not write the books aſcribed to him. The evidence, that the Bible contains a fair impartial account of the Jewiſh nation, from its original to the time of Veſpaſian, and of the chriſtian church, from the birth of Jeſus Chriſt to the time of John's cloſing the canon of Scripture, on the iſle of Patmos, is as plain and as concluſive, to ſay the leaſt, as is the evidence, that there were ever any ſuch nations as the Aſſyrians, Grecians, and Romans. If the hiſtory, written of the Jews and Chriſtians, may be challenged, ſo we may alſo challenge the hiſtories of Strabo, Tacitus, or of any writer whatever.

That

That ſuch a perſon, as Jeſus Chriſt, appeared, in the land of Judea, in the Auguſtan age, that he was eminent for his virtue, and performed many ſurpriſing works, we have concluſive evidence from pagan authors; whoſe teſtimony cannot be rejected, as they were men of learning, had means to know the facts, and were moſt bitter enemies of Chriſtianity.

The taxing of the Roman Empire, which brought Joſeph and Mary to Bethlehem, is mentioned, by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dion Caſſius. The appearing of a new ſtar, in the Eaſt, which led the wiſe men to Jeſus, is recorded by Chalcidius. The ſlaughter, which Herod made of the innocent children, in Bethlehem, is frequently mentioned by Roman, and other hiſtorians of that age. That Chriſt went into Egypt, as recorded by Matthew, and reſided there for ſome time, is acknowledged by Celſus, one of the greateſt enemies of the chriſtian religion. Tacitus ſays, that our Savior was brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, and condemned and crucified by him. That Chriſt performed many extraordinary cures and mighty works, out of the common courſe of nature, is confeſſed, by Julian the apoſtate, Porphyry, and Hierocles, who were heathen, and moſt virulent enemies and perſecutors of the Chriſtians. That Chriſt predicted many events, which came to paſs according to his predictions, and that there was a miraculous darkneſs, and a very great quaking of the earth, when he was crucified, is related by Phlegon, the Trallian.

lian. That Chriſt was worſhipped as a God by the Chriſtians; that they would rather ſuffer death than blaſpheme him; that they received a ſacrament, and by it entered into a vow of abſtaining from ſin and wickedneſs; and that they had private aſſemblies of worſhip, and uſed to join together in hymns, are teſtimonies of Chriſtianity, given by Pliny, the younger, who lived about ſeventy years after the death of Chriſt.

Infidels and oppoſers of Chriſtianity, who lived in the firſt century, never preſumed to deny the facts, recorded of Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, whoſe fame had ſpread all around the world.—They acknowledged the exiſtence of theſe perſons, and the ſurpriſing works, which they did. But to ward off the evidence, ariſing from theſe facts, they imputed the power, by which they were done, to the influence of evil ſpirits.

As the miniſtry of Chriſt and his apoſtles was public; as their miracles were wrought in the open view of the ſun, in the preſence of many ſpectators, who were capable of forming a right judgment; and as men of the higheſt credit, among heathen writers, who lived in the time of theſe actions, or very ſoon after, have related them as facts; ſo there can be no objection againſt the accounts of the evangeliſts and apoſtles, if they are viewed only as hiſtories of tranſactions, with which they were acquainted. Had the miracles, recorded in the New Teſtament, been the effects of legerdemain, or magical rites; had the writings of the evangeliſts and apoſtles been forgeries;

had

had there been any deceit, or cunning contrivance, in the introduction and propagation of the chriſtian faith, its implacable enemies, who lived at that time, who were men of ſagacity and learning, and had means of information, and exerted all their ability to oppoſe its progreſs, would certainly have been able to detect the impoſture.

No reaſonable objection, therefore, can lie againſt the credibility of the goſpel hiſtory. Its truth appears to be as well eſtabliſhed as the truth of any hiſtory whatever. And we may, of courſe, believe, that the prophecies, it contains, were really ſpoken, by the perſons, to whom they are aſcribed ; and we may fairly reaſon, from their accompliſhment, in ſupport of Chriſt's divinity, and the true inſpiration of the apoſtles. That ſuch prophecies, as are recorded in the New Teſtament, were really uttered by Jeſus and his apoſtles, and that they were, in fact, uttered prior to the events, we need not take for granted to be true.— For, of their truth we have the moſt rational and concluſive evidence ; evidence ariſing from bitter oppoſers, and whoſe teſtimony cannot be called in queſtion, without undermining the authority of all public writings and teſtimonials.

HAVING made ſome general remarks upon the nature of prophecy, and ſhown, that the ſacred books, which contain many predictions of future events, are no forgeries, as frequent refer-

ence

ence was had to them, by the beſt hiſtorians of heathen antiquity, and as it was impoſſible to have impoſed them on the world, at any time of the Jewiſh, or Chriſtian church, we ſhall, now, carefully examine ſome of the moſt noted prophecies in the Bible, ſhew their completion, and make a few reflections, as we paſs along.

SECTION I.

JACOB'S *Prophecy of the Scepter.*

THE appearing of a Divine Perſon, in this world, to ſave men from the ruins of the apoſtaſy, was the *burden* of all the prophets. Of this glorious perſon, and the time of his coming, the patriarch Jacob propheſied, when he ſaid, "The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him ſhall the gathering of the people be."—(Gen. xlix. 10.) That this prophecy had a particular reference to the promiſed Meſſiah, and terminated in him, has been the general ſenſe of all expoſitors, both Jewiſh and Chriſtian. Although they have not fully agreed, as to the preciſe meaning of the words, *ſcepter*, *Shiloh*, and *the paſſing of the lawgiver from between Judah's feet*; yet they have agreed, that the whole verſe

was

was a prediction of the coming of God's Son, to erect a kingdom of truth and righteouſneſs.

That we may have a clear idea of this prophecy, and reaſon concluſively upon it, we ſhall exhibit, in one general view, the ſeveral readings and expoſitions, which have been given of it.—In his tranſlation of the Bible, Arius Montanus renders the verſe thus, "The rod ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and the nations yield obedience to him." The Greek Bible ſays, that, "The prince ſhall not ceaſe from Judah, nor a general from between his feet, until thoſe things come to paſs, which are laid up in ſtore for him." The Syriac Bible reads thus, "The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor an interpreter from between his feet, until he come, whoſe right it is, and the gentiles ſhall wait for him." The Arabian Bible reads the paſſage, in this way, "The rod ſhall not go over from Judah, nor a legiſlator from between his feet, whoſe even he himſelf is, and to whom the nations ſhall be gathered together." Jerome, in his Latin Bible, commonly called *the Vulgate*, ſays, that, "The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a general from his thigh, until he come, who is to be ſent, and he ſhall be the expectation of the gentiles." The Targum of Onkelos explains the verſe thus, "The prince ſhall not be taken from Judah, nor the ſcribe from his ſons' ſons, even forever, until the Meſſiah come, whoſe is the kingdom; and to whom the nations ſhall be obedient." The Jeruſalem Tar-

gum

gum expounds, in this manner, " Kings ſhall not ceaſe from the family of Judah, nor ſkilful doctors of the law from his children's children, until the time wherein the Meſſiah ſhall come, unto whom all the kingdoms of the world ſhall, at length, come to be ſubject." The Targum of Jonathan ſays, that, " Kings and governors ſhall not ceaſe from the tribe of Judah, nor ſcribes to explain the law from his ſeed, until the time, that the king Meſſiah, the youngeſt of his ſons, ſhall come, and becauſe of him the people ſhall be diſſolved."*

The Bible has been tranſlated from the original Hebrew into many different languages, and every tranſlation of this text evidently points out the Meſſiah, as the perſon of whom the prophecy was uttered. The Jewiſh interpreters and commentators, who lived between the Babylonian captivity and deſtruction of Jeruſalem, united, in ſentiment, that the promiſed Meſſiah is the perſon intended, and that he was to come before the deſtruction of their ſtate. To leſſen the evidence ariſing from this prophecy, that Jeſus of Nazareth is the true Meſſiah, the latter Jews have, indeed, given it a different explanation. The concurrent ſenſe of all chriſtian expoſitors is direct in point, that the Son of God is the perſon intended by the prediction. And if Deiſts will grant, that there was ſuch a perſon as good old Jacob, that he ſpake the words under conſideration, and that they are

a prophecy

* If the reader deſire further ſatisfaction, he may conſult Bedford on the Trinity, Le Clerc on this text, and Biſhops Newton and Sherlock on the Prophecies.

a prophecy, they muſt alſo grant, that the coming of an eminent perſon was predicted, and that he was to come before the diſperſion of the Jews, among the nations of the earth.

By the *ſcepter's not departing from Judah, until Shiloh come*, we are to underſtand, that the tribe of Judah would continue together as a diſtinct tribe, having elders, rulers, and judges of its own, until the coming of the Prince of peace. During the whole economy of the Old Teſtament, Chriſt was the inviſible king of Abraham's poſterity. And the promiſe contained in Jacob's prophecy, is, that the tribe of Judah would remain together, having their own rulers, until the promiſed child ſhould be born, who would *ſet upon the throne of David, and rule his kingdom with juſtice and judgment, even forever.*

The word, *ſcepter*, originally means the ſtaff, or rod, of authority, which rulers formerly carried in their hand, as an emblem of their power. But this word is often uſed, by a known figure of ſpeech, to mean a tribe, or collection of people, under a particular government. When the children of Iſrael were aſſembled for the choice of a king, Samuel ſays to them, Preſent yourſelves before the Lord, *by your tribes ;* in the Greek Bible it is, *by your ſcepters.* God threatened Solomon to rend his kingdom aſunder, but with this reſerve, *I will give one tribe to thy ſon :* In the Greek Bible it is, *I will give one ſcepter to thy ſon.* Of the like import we might quote many other inſtances, if it were neceſſary. But theſe,

with the preceding remarks, are ſufficient to prove, that the prophecy gives a ſpecial promiſe to Judah, that he ſhould not ceaſe from being a tribe, or body corporate, having rulers and governors of his own, until the Meſſiah ſhould deſcend from heaven, to eſtabliſh a ſpiritual kingdom over all nations.

Having fixed the meaning of the word *ſcepter*, it of courſe follows, that the word, *lawgiver*, muſt be confined to ſuch officers and rulers, as belonged to a ſingle tribe only. Each ſeparate tribe of Jacob's ſons had its own prince, elders, and judges; and this form of government continued, among the tribes, with a little alteration, until they were ſucceſſively deſtroyed, or diſperſed among the nations of the earth. That Judah, as a diſtinct tribe, ſhould give laws to all the other tribes, was never the intent of the prophecy. And the tribe of Judah never aſſumed this authority, even when David and Solomon were kings of the whole nation. In pronouncing the bleſſing on the ſeveral tribes, Jacob ſays, *Dan ſhall judge his people as one of the tribes of Iſrael.* And in this ſenſe, only, did the lawgiver continue between the feet of Judah, until Shiloh came.

Having ſhewn, that Judah, according to the prophecy, was to continue as a diſtinct tribe, enjoying his own lawgiver, or having his own rulers and judges, until the limited time, until the coming of Shiloh; and having alſo ſhewn, that by Shiloh we are to underſtand the promiſed Meſſiah,

we ſhall, now, attempt to prove, that this prophecy has been, literally, accompliſhed.

In proving this accompliſhment, we ſhall conſider the Bible, as a faithful, authentic, hiſtory, giving a true account of the tribe of Judah, from its firſt exiſtence, in this capacity, to the coming of the Meſſiah. It is, then evident, from the Bible, that Judah, as were the other ſons of Jacob, was conſtituted the chief head of his own family, and that his immediate deſcendants were put under his authority, having rulers and judges choſen from among themſelves. This diſtinction of tribes and ſeparate authority had its riſe, it is plain, in Egypt, when Jacob pronounced the bleſſing on his ſons. After this event, and not before, they are mentioned, as diſtinct tribes, having their own *elders*, or *heads of houſes*, or *rulers of the congregation*.—To prove, by mentioning particular texts, that the tribe of Judah maintained this diſtinction and authority, from the days of Jacob to the Babylonian captivity, is unneceſſary; for the proof is apparent, wherever any thing is ſaid of this tribe. Before this time, the tribe of Benjamin had incorporated itſelf with Judah, and the other tribes, Judah excepted, had been conquered and carried captive, into the eaſt, by Shalmanezer, king of Aſſyria. From this captivity they never returned, a few excepted, to their own land, but were ſwallowed up in the nations, among whom they lived, and entirely loſt all diſtinctions, as a ſeparate people.

When Jacob propheſied, that *the ſcepter ſhould not*

not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, it was implied, that all the other tribes ſhould loſe their ſcepters and lawgivers, before this time arrived. And the event, accordingly took place. But Judah, as we have ſeen, maintained his diſtinction and authority, till the time of the Babylonian captivity. And, during the ſeventy years of being in the Babylonian empire, the tribe of Judah, it is plain, had their own princes and elders. By the direction of the prophet Jeremiah, the Jews *built houſes and dwelt in them; they planted gardens and eat the fruit thereof.* During this captivity, they were ſubject, it is true, to the general power of the Empire; and yet they were permitted to live as a diſtinct people, to inſtitute their own feaſts and faſts, to appoint their own rulers and governors, and to regulate themſelves according to their own police. Both Ezra and Nehemiah make frequent mention of the *elders of the people*, and *chief of the fathers*, as managing the concerns of the nation. And when Cyrus iſſued his famous decree for the reſtoration of the Jews, he ordered, that the veſſels of the temple ſhould be delivered to *the Prince* of Judah. Thus evident is it, that they maintained their own diſtinction and authority, in the time of this long captivity.

After their return to their own land, and the rebuilding of the city and temple, they enjoyed, it muſt be granted, a leſs degree of liberty under the Grecian kings, who ſucceſſively made them their tributaries. But even through theſe diſtreſſing

ſing times, they lived as a diſtinct people, had their own high prieſts, princes, and elders.

During the reign of the *Aſmonean family*, it is apparent from the book of *Maccabees*, that a ſimilar diſtinction of tribe and rulers, was in being. According to the teſtimony of Joſephus,* the ambaſſadors, who were ſent, about this time, from Jeruſalem to Rome, ſpoke in the name of *Judas Maccabæus* and his brethren, and the people of the Jews. Theſe ambaſſadors formed with the Roman ſenate a treaty, and it is ſtiled *a covenant with the people of the Jews*. When a treaty was made with the Lacedemonians, the public letter was couched in the following ſtile, *Jonathan the high prieſt, and the elders of the nation, and the prieſts, and the other people of the Jews*. And when Simon was made governor, authority was conveyed to him, *in the congregation of the prieſts and the people, and rulers of the nation, and elders of the country*.†

Theſe examples are ſufficient to prove, that the Jews ſubſiſted, as a diſtinct people, and were not extinguiſhed under the authority of the *Aſmonean family*.

In this ſituation, the polity of the Jews continued till our Savior was born. At his birth, and for ſeveral years after, they had their high prieſts, rulers of ſynagogues, elders, and ſenate. The Roman government, it is true, had, in ſome reſpects, leſſened their authority, in certain capital

 cauſes.

* Joſephus contra Apion, lib. ii. ſec. 11.
† Mac. xiv. 28.

cauſes. But they were yet a free people. They enjoyed their own religion, laws, and rulers.—To the Jews the Romans granted the ſame privileges, that they did to all other conquered nations, which was permitting them to retain their gods, and temples, and cuſtoms, and general laws, and allowing them to have certain officers, choſen from among themſelves. By what the Jews ſaid to Chriſt, "We are Abraham's ſeed, and were never in bondage to any man," it is apparent, that they viewed themſelves, as poſſeſſing all thoſe civil immunities, which they had poſſeſſed, from the firſt beginning of their tribe.

By theſe remarks, it is evident, as any fact from hiſtory can be, that *the ſcepter did not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came.* After the coming of Jeſus Chriſt, the affairs of the Jewiſh nation began to aſſume a threatening aſpect. Rebellions againſt the Roman Empire ſoon broke out; conſpiracies and confuſions aroſe among themſelves; the Romans ſoon marched their armies againſt the Jews devoted to deſtruction, ſlew thouſands of the people, laid their cities in ruinous heaps, overthrew Jeruſalem and the temple, from their very foundations, and ſold, in the open market, a very great multitude, for ſlaves. And thus the nation was diſperſed, among all people, and have never, ſince this dreadful time, kept together, in one body, as a diſtinct people. They have had neither *prince*, nor *lawgiver;* nor can they ſhew any marks of the ſcepter's being among them. But

wherever

wherever they live, they are the ſcorn and deriſion of people, wholly ſubject to foreign rulers, and eſteemed as the refuſe of the world. Their genealogies are loſt; and of courſe the diſtinction of families deſtroyed; and, with all their knowledge, they cannot aſcertain thoſe perſons, who, at the firſt diviſion of the land, by Joſhua, were owners of the different parts of the land of Canaan; and even the family of David is, at this day, utterly unknown.

From the remarks on this prediction, it is a plain inference, that Jacob was the ſubject of divine inſpiration, when he declared what would be the future ſtate of the tribe of Judah, until the coming of Jeſus Chriſt. And, alſo, it is equally plain, that Jeſus of Nazareth is the promiſed Meſſiah. For, according to the prophecy, the ſcepter was not to depart from Judah, until the true Meſſiah ſhould come. But, that the ſcepter has, long ſince, departed, is a fact, which no infidel can diſpute; and conſequently the Meſſiah hath, already, come. The ſcepter departed from Judah, very ſoon, after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by the Romans, and hath been departed, for more than ſeventeen hundred years; and we may, hence conclude, that Jeſus, who was born in Judea, in the reign of Auguſtus Cæſar, and crucified, when Tiberius was emperor, is the true Meſſiah. This concluſion is as fair as can be drawn from reaſoning upon facts, recorded, in any hiſtory whatever.

Paſſing over many prophecies, contained in the

Old

Old Teſtament, we ſhall, now, give particular attention to thoſe, which were uttered concerning the entire deſtruction of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, and Egypt. If the prophets, whoſe names are mentioned with honor, in the Bible, predicted the ruin of theſe cities and nations; and if they have been ruined according to theſe predictions, then, ſubſtantial evidence will appear, that they were the true prophets of the true God. That there were ſuch men as Iſaiah, Nahum, Hoſea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, who lived in the land of Canaan, in the days of Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Zedekiah, kings of Judah, we have as ſubſtantial evidence, as that there ever lived ſuch perſons as Zoroaſter, Socrates, and Plato. Theſe prophets propheſied, one after another, concerning the diſaſters and final overthrow of the greateſt cities and kingdoms of antiquity; and they delivered their prophecies, many years, before the events took place.

SECTION II.

The Prophecy of NINEVEH'S *Deſtruction.*

THE entire deſolation of Nineveh is mentioned, by Nahum, the prophet, who ſpends a whole chapter in predicting this terrible event, and its attending circumſtances. The prophet Zephaniah

ah had in view the total ruin of Nineveh, when he propheſied, that *God would ſtretch out his hand againſt the north.* (Chap. iii. 13, 14.) Other prophets have occaſionally predicted this event, as any one may ſee, who will carefully read the Bible.

Nineveh was a very ancient city, and the metropolis of the Aſſyrian Empire. Strabo ſays, that, "Nineveh was a city, greater than Babylon." And Diodorus Siculus affirms, that, "its builder, Ninus, propoſed to build a city of magnitude, that it ſhould not only be the greateſt of cities, which were then in the world, but that none of thoſe, who ſhould be born after that time, attempting the like, ſhould eaſily exceed it." Jonah, in his prophecy, ſays, that *it was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey.* Computing *twenty* miles for a day's journey, as was the ancient reckoning, this account of Jonah makes Nineveh to have been *ſixty* miles in circumference. According to Diodorus Siculus, as quoted by Biſhop Newton, the length of Nineveh was one hundred and fifty furlongs, its breadth ninety furlongs, and its circumference four hundred and eighty furlongs; that is, about twenty miles long, about twelve miles broad, and above ſixty miles in compaſs.

This immenſe city, containing many thouſands of inhabitants, and ſtrongly fortified with walls and ramparts, was taken and deſtroyed, according to the prophecy of Nahum, by the Medes and Perſians. And notwithſtanding ancient hiſto-

rians

rians disagree about the time when, and the kings by whom it was destroyed, yet they agree, that the event took place, in early ages. Diodorus Siculus affirms, that Arbaces, the Median, assisted by Belesis, the Babylonian, took Nineveh, and overthrew the Assyrian empire. This writer is very particular in relating the circumstances of taking the city. And, as his description casts light upon Nahum's prophecy, we shall quote a few sentences, and compare them with the prediction.

Diodorus says, that, "While all the Assyrian army were feasting for their former victories, that those about Arbaces, being informed, by some deserters, of the negligence and drunkenness, in the camp of the enemies, assaulted them, unexpectedly, by night, and falling orderly on them disorderly, and prepared on them unprepared, became masters of the camp, and slew many of the soldiers, and drove the rest into the city." In describing this event, the prophet says, "While they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." According to Diodorus, "There was an old prophecy, that Nineveh should not be taken till the river became an enemy to the city; and in the third year of the siege, the river being swoln with continual rains, overflowed part of the city, and broke down the wall for twenty furlongs; then the king, thinking that the oracle was fulfilled, and the river became an enemy to the city, built a large funeral pile in his palace,

palace, and collecting together all his wealth, and his concubines and eunuchs, burnt himself and the palace with them all; and the enemy entered the breach, that the waters had made, and took the city." Foreseeing these events, by the spirit of prophecy, Nahum says, "That the gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the place shall be dissolved." And he also says, that, "With an overflowing flood he (God) will make an utter end of the place thereof." Diodorus says, that Arbaces carried from Nineveh to Ecbatana many talents of silver and gold. Of this plundering Nahum prophesied, when he said, "Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; for there is no end of the store, and glory out of all the pleasant furniture." To fulfil the prophecy, the city must be destroyed by fire and water; and Diodorus says, that, by fire and water it was destroyed.

"But what probability, says Bishop Newton in speaking of this event, was there, that the capital city of a great kingdom, a city, which was sixty miles in compass, a city, which contained so many thousand inhabitants, a city, which had walls, according to Diodorus Siculus, an hundred feet high, and so thick, that three chariots could go abreast upon them, and fifteen hundred towers, at proper distances, in the walls, of two hundred feet in height; what probability was there, I say, that such a city should, ever, be totally destroyed? And yet so totally was it destroyed,

ed, that the place is hardly known, where it was ſituated."

All the travellers through the ancient Aſſyrian empire, and all writers, for nearly two thouſand years paſt, who ſpeak of Nineveh, agree in their accounts, that the place is ſcarcely known, where this famous city once ſtood. On the banks of the Tigris, they tell us, are vaſt heaps of rubbiſh, and many vaults and caverns, where the inhabitants ſuppoſe, that Nineveh was formerly ſituated.

So exactly have the prophecies of its ruin been accompliſhed. And yet it is conjectured, by very learned men, that theſe huge piles are ruins of the Perſian, and not the Aſſyrian, Nineveh. So faithfully has God verified the words of his prophets!

And, yet, in oppoſition to the united voice of the moſt celebrated and authentic hiſtories, will Deiſts riſe up and ſay, that the prophecies, in the Bible, are a ſet of forgeries. Of convincing ſuch men there is but little proſpect. The wavering and impartial may have light thrown into their minds. And for their ſakes are theſe obſervations principally made.

Suppoſing, for example, that one man, or a number of men in ſucceſſion, had appeared, two hundred years ago, in Great Britain, and predicted, that, in a limited time, the nation would be wholly deſtroyed, and all the cities and villages would be laid ſo entirely waſte, that no marks would be left, where they once ſtood; and ſup-

poſing,

poſing, that the prediction was now literally accompliſhed, ſhould we not have evidence, that they were divinely inſpired? The evidence, in this caſe, it is thought, would be ſo powerful, that even unbelievers muſt hold their peace, if they would ſuſtain the character of impartial men. And yet the evidence, in favor of religion, ariſing from prophecies about Nineveh's total deſtruction, is equally as powerful. Length of time, it is a fact, does not invalidate the truth of theſe predictions: For we have the concurring voice of all antiquity, and of modern writers, and travellers, to authenticate the events.

SECTION III.

The Prophecy of BABYLON'S *Deſtruction.*

BABYLON, like Nineveh, was a very ancient, ſtrong, and populous, city. And, being a moſt bitter enemy of the Iſraelites, it became the ſubject of many predictions, denouncing calamities, and threatening its total ruin. This city is called, in ſcripture, *the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, the lady of kingdoms*; and it is ſaid to be *abundant in treaſures, and the praiſe of the whole earth.* Its walls, towers, gardens, temples, with its beauty and magnificence, are ſo highly extolled, by heathen

authors, that it may, well, be reckoned the wonder of ages. According to Herodotus, the city had an hundred gates of ſolid braſs; which are alſo mentioned by the prophet Iſaiah. Its walls, according to the above heathen author, were three hundred and fifty feet high, eighty ſeven feet thick, and ſo broad, that ſix chariots might go abreaſt, on their ſummit.

That a city, ſo ſtrongly fortified as this, and the capital of a rich and powerful kingdom, would be, entirely, overthrown, in a ſhort period, there ſeemed to be little human probability. Its deſtruction, however, was determined by God, and the time and manner of its deſolation appointed. To the prophets Iſaiah and Jeremiah, the Divine Being was pleaſed to give information of this aſtoniſhing event. Iſaiah uttered his prophecy, about one hundred and ſixty years, before the taking of Babylon; and Jeremiah, about fifty-ſix years.—The taking of Babylon, and other deſolations, brought upon the city, are related by Herodotus and Xenophon, who lived not far from three hundred years after Iſaiah.

As theſe four men were writers of ſtrict integrity, we ſhall compare the prophecies with the hiſtories of the events, and ſee what evidence may ariſe, from the compariſon, in favor of our holy religion.

That Cyrus, king of Perſia, would be the conqueror of this great city, was foretold by the prophet Iſaiah, about an hundred years, before he was born. By the prophet, God ſpeaks in

this

this manner : " Thus ſaith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whoſe right hand I have holden, to ſubdue nations before him : And I will looſe the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates, and the gates ſhall not be ſhut.—I will break in pieces the gates of braſs, and cut in ſunder the bars of iron. And I will give thee the treaſures of darkneſs, and hidden riches of ſecret places." (Iſaiah xlv. 1—3.) Xenophon, and all heathen authors, who ſpeak of this important victory, agree, that Cyrus, the Perſian, laid ſiege againſt Babylon, and took it, after ſurmounting many difficulties, and ſuffering many afflictions.

That various nations would combine to ſubdue this city, was predicted by the prophet Iſaiah.— " The noiſe of a great multitude," ſaith the prophet, " a tumultuous noiſe of the kingdoms of nations, gathered together, the Lord of hoſts muſtereth the hoſt of battle." (Iſai. xiii. 4.) In ſpeaking of theſe nations, who were to go againſt Babylon, Jeremiah ſays, (ch. li. 27.) " Set ye up a ſtandard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations againſt her, call together againſt her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Aſhkenaz." And, according to Xenophon, the army of Cyrus was compoſed of various nations, among whom were theſe very people, mentioned by Jeremiah. Before this, Cyrus had ſubdued many kingdoms, incorporated them in the number of his ſubjects, and he now obliged their armies to march with his, to the wars againſt the Babylonians.

Foreſeeing,

Foreſeeing, by the ſpirit of prophecy, what terror this powerful army would bring upon the king of Babylon and his people, Jeremiah ſays; "The land ſhall tremble and ſorrow.—The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight; they have remained in their holds; their might hath failed; they became as women." (Chap. li. 29, 30.) According to Xenophon, this prediction was literally accompliſhed. By his hiſtory of the war, we are informed, that, after the loſs of a few battles the Babylonians were ſo diſheartened, that they never durſt face the enemy again; but retired within their walls, and there remained, until the city was taken.

The river Euphrates ran nearly through the center of Babylon. On each ſide of the river were conſtructed very high walls, that had gates of braſs, and ſtairs, leading down to the waters, which were more than twelve feet deep. A city ſo fortified with walls and brazen gates, ſo well ſupplied with water from the river, and furniſhed with proviſions to laſt the inhabitants for more than twenty years,* could not have been taken by the ancient mode of fighting with ſpears and javelins. But the prophets, Iſaiah and Jeremiah, being divinely taught, predicted the manner, in which Cyrus would be able to conquer his enemies.

As the Babylonians deemed their fortifications, on the banks of the river, ſtronger than thoſe on the plain, and as they apprehended no danger from this quarter, on account of the depth of the water,

* See Xenophon's Cyropœdia, lib. vii. p. 113.

water, ſo they kept the gates, in this part of the city, open, night and day. The turning of Euphrates, therefore, from its natural courſe, was the only mean, by which an entrance could be made into the city. And, accordingly, the prophets foretold this event, when they ſaid: "A drought is upon her waters, and they ſhall be dried up." (Jer. l. 38.) "I will dry up her ſea, and make her ſprings dry." (Jer. li. 36.) "That ſaith to the deep, Be dry; and I will dry up her rivers." (Iſai. xliv. 27.)

According to Herodotus and Xenophon, Cyrus turned the natural courſe of the river into the lake and canals, which the inhabitants had dug on the plains of Shinar, to receive the waters, when the floods were very high. In this way he ſo entirely drained the river, that his army marched, with eaſe, in the channel, to the gates, on the banks of the river, and ſo entered the city. In this manner was accompliſhed the prediction of bringing a drought upon the waters of the river, and of drying them up.

That Babylon ſhould be taken, in the time of a great feaſt and drunkenneſs, was foretold by Jeremiah. Knowing this event, by the ſpirit of prophecy, he ſpeaks thus, in the name of the Lord: "For their heat, I will make their feaſts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice and ſleep a perpetual ſleep, and not awake, ſaith the Lord. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wiſe men, and her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men, and they ſhall

ſleep a perpetual ſleep, and not awake, ſaith the king, whoſe name is the Lord of hoſts. I have laid a ſnare for thee, and thou waſt not aware; thou art found and alſo caught." (Jer. li. 39. 57. and l. 24.) And, accordingly, we are informed, by impartial hiſtorians, that the city was taken, in the night, during a time of great feſtivity and drunkenneſs. And ſo devoted were the inhabitants to pleaſure and intemperance, and inattentive to any danger from the Perſians, that the enemy had conquered the extreme parts of the city, before thoſe, in the middle, knew, that they had entered the walls.* And then was fulfilled the prediction, that, "One poſt ſhall run to meet another, and one meſſenger to meet another, to ſhew the king of Babylon, that his city is taken, at one end." (Jer. li. 31.) Belſhazzar was the king. And the city was taken, on the night, when he and his princes drank wine out of the golden and ſilver veſſels, which had been brought from the temple of the Lord, in Jeruſalem, as mentioned by the prophet Daniel.

Could Iſaiah and Jeremiah have, ſo exactly, deſcribed theſe events, and ſo long beforehand, except they had been divinely inſpired? That theſe two prophets lived and uttered theſe predictions, years before the taking of Babylon, is as certain as that Xenophon and Herodotus lived after its reduction, and wrote hiſtories of the event. And, yet, ſuch is the inconſiſtency of infidels, that they credit

* This is the account of Herodotus and Xenophon. See alſo Rollin's Ancient Hiſtory.

credit the writings of theſe hiſtorians, and reject the prophecies as enthuſiaſtic and fictitious. Such partiality is the effect of great blindneſs and oppoſition to the truth.

As theſe prophets predicted the circumſtances of taking Babylon, and by what king and army the victory would be obtained; ſo they alſo predicted, that this renowned city would become, like a deſolate wilderneſs, and that every ſign of its ancient grandeur and ſtrength, would be ſo entirely ſwept away, as to leave it the aſtoniſhment of future ages.

Of this deſolation Iſaiah propheſied, in the following words: "And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, ſhall be, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It ſhall never be inhabited, neither ſhall it be dwelt in, from generation to generation, neither ſhall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither ſhall the ſhepherds make their folds there. But wild beaſts of the deſert† ſhall lie there, and their houſes ſhall be full of doleful creatures, and owls ſhall dwell there, and ſatyrs ſhall dance there. And the wild beaſts of the Iſlands ſhall cry in their deſolate houſes; and dragons, in their pleaſant palaces." (Iſai. xiii. 19—22.) The ſame ſentiment is expreſſed, in the prophecies, to which reference is had, at the bottom of the page.*

Surpriſing as it may ſeem, theſe prophecies have been, literally, fulfilled. Jerome, who was Biſhop of Carthage, in the fourth century of the chriſtian

† Iſaiah xiv. 22, 23. Jer. l. 23—41. and li. 13---44.

chriſtian æra, ſaith, that, "Babylon was converted into a park, in which wild beaſts of various kinds were kept for the hunting of the later kings of Perſia." In his commentary on Iſaiah, he ſaith, (chap. xiii. p. 111.) "We have learned from a certain Elamite brother, who came from thoſe parts, that the royal huntings are in Babylon, and wild beaſts, of every kind, are confined within the circuit of its walls." A German, by the name of Rauwolf, who travelled through this land, in 1574, ſaith, that, "This country is ſo dry and barren, that it cannot be tilled, and that, in the place, where the city is ſuppoſed to have ſtood, and all around, is nothing but ruin and deſolation, and that poiſonous creatures, lodging in the rubbiſh, are ſo numerous, that none durſt approach nearer to it, than half a league, except during two months, in the winter, when thoſe animals never ſtir out of their holes."*

In his remarks upon the Turkiſh empire, Mr. Salmon obſerves, (vol. i. chap. 2,) "What is as ſtrange as any thing, related of Babylon, is, that we cannot learn, either by ancient writers, or modern travellers, where this famous city ſtood; only in general that it was ſituated, in the province of Chaldea, upon the river Euphrates."

The remains of ancient Babylon, it is agreed by all modern travellers and hiſtorians, are entirely ſwept from the earth. So completely has God fulfilled his predictions, uttered by the pro-

phets,

* See Newton on the Prophecies. Vol. i. p. 304.

phets, concerning this magnificent city, once the glory and wonder of the world!

"By theſe accounts," ſaith Biſhop Newton, (Diſſer. vol. i. p. 309,) "we ſee how punctually God hath fulfilled the predictions of the prophets, concerning Babylon. When it was converted into a chace for wild beaſts to feed and breed there, then were actually accompliſhed the words of the prophets, that *the wild beaſts of the deſerts, with the wild beaſts of the iſlands, ſhall dwell there, and cry, in their deſolate houſes.* Another part of the country is deſcribed as dry and naked, and barren of every thing; ſo that thereby was fulfilled another prophecy: *Her cities are a deſolation, a dry land, and a wilderneſs; a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any ſon of man paſs thereby.*" The place, thereabouts, is repreſented as overrun with ſerpents, and ſcorpions, and all ſorts of venomous and unclean creatures, ſo that *their houſes are full of doleful creatures, and dragons cry in their pleaſant palaces; and Babylon is become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an aſtoniſhment and hiſſing, without an inhabitant; neither can the Arabian pitch his tent there, neither can the ſhepherds make their folds there.*— When we find, that modern travellers cannot, now, certainly, diſcover the ſpot of ground, where this renowned city was, once, ſituated, we may properly ſay, *How is Babylon become a deſolation among the nations? Every purpoſe of the Lord hath he accompliſhed againſt Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a deſolation, without an inhabitant.*

And

And the expreſſion is no leſs true, than ſublime, that *the Lord of hoſts hath ſwept it away, with the beſom of deſtruction.*"

To prove the truth of the chriſtian religion, ſuch prophecies, and their accompliſhment, are very powerful. Could Deiſts find ſuch concluſive reaſoning to ſupport their infidelity, how would they triumph over the faith of Chriſtians!

SECTION IV.

The Prophecies reſpecting TYRE.

ACCORDING to ancient hiſtory, there were two cities, in Phœnicia, both of which were called Tyre. The ancient Tyre ſtood on the eaſtern ſhore of the Mediterranean; and the later Tyre ſtood, on an iſland, at a ſmall diſtance. Both were, formerly, places of great riches and renown; and both were famous for their commerce and manufactures. For this reaſon, Tyre is called, by the prophet Iſaiah, *a mart* of nations, the crowning city; whoſe merchants are princes, whoſe traffickers are the honorable of the earth. (Iſa. xxiii. 3. 8.)

In the height of its proſperity and ſtrength, the prophets were inſpired to foretell the amazing calamities coming upon the city, and its final deſtruction. For their debauchery and pride, and their cruelty to the Iſraelites, were the inhabit-

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ants doomed to ruin ; and the city, to a perpetual deſolation.

According to prophecy, the Babylonians were to be the firſt inſtruments of executing the divine vengeance on this wicked and devoted people.—And, hence, we read, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, (ch. xxvi. 7—11,) " Thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horſes and with chariots, and with horſemen, and companies, and much people. And he ſhall ſlay, with the ſword, thy daughters, in the field, and he ſhall make a fort againſt thee, and caſt a mount againſt thee, and lift up the buckler againſt thee. And he ſhall ſet engines of war againſt thy walls ; and, with his axes, he ſhall break down thy towers.—He ſhall ſlay thy people with the ſword, and thy ſtrong garriſons ſhall go down to the ground."

In his book againſt Apion, (lib. i. ſec. 20, and 21,) Joſephus ſays, that Menander, the Epheſian, tranſlated the Phœnician annals into Greek ; which relate, that Nebuchadnezzar beſieged Tyre, during thirteen years, when Ithobald was king. And, as the ſiege continued ſo long, the Babylonians, of courſe, ſuffered very great hardſhips ; which were predicted, by Ezekiel, in theſe words : " Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, cauſed his army to ſerve a great ſervice againſt Tyrus : Every head was made bald, and every ſhoulder was peeled." Theſe Phœnician annals, as Dean Prideaux has proved, in his Con-

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nection of Sacred and Profane Hiſtory, (part i. b. 2,) exactly agree with Ezekiel's account of the time, when the city was taken, and by whom.—Theſe tranſactions relate eſpecially to ancient Tyre, which ſtood on the continent. And, to every candid mind, it muſt give ſatisfaction, that we are able to prove, by ancient hiſtory, how exactly events have correſponded with the predictions.

Of the inhabitants of Tyre it was predicted, by way of advice, that *they ſhould paſs over to Tarſhiſh*;* that *they ſhould ariſe and paſs over to Chittim;* which has ever been underſtood, by learned men, to be the iſlands and countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea; and that *here they ſhould find no reſt.* Being the beſt navigators of ancient times, the Tyrians had planted many colonies, on the iſlands, in the Mediterranean; and on the ſea coaſt, both in Africa and Europe. When, therefore, they were cloſely beſieged, by Nebuchadnezzar, they would, naturally, convey away themſelves, and their property, as faſt as poſſible, to theſe new ſettlements. And, accordingly, Jerome, in his commentary on Ezekiel, ſaith; "We have read, in the hiſtories of the Aſſyrians, that, when the Tyrians were beſieged, after they ſaw no hope of eſcaping, they went on board their ſhips, and fled to Carthage, or to ſome iſlands of the Ionian and Ægean Sea." In another place, he ſaith; "When the Tyrians ſaw, that the works, for carrying on the ſiege, were perfected, and the foundations of the walls were ſhaken by the battering

* Tarteſſus, in Spain.

tering rams, whatſoever precious things, in gold, ſilver, clothes, and various kinds of furniture, the nobility had, they put on board their ſhips, and carried to the iſlands; ſo that, the city being taken, Nebuchadnezzar found nothing worthy of his labor. And, then, was fulfilled the prediction of Ezekiel, who ſpake, (as if the event were paſt, as was uſual with the prophets) concerning the diſappointment of Nebuchadnezzar, when he ſhould take the city. "Son of man," ſaith God to the prophet, "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, cauſed his army to ſerve a great ſervice againſt Tyrus: Every head was made bald, and every ſhoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the ſervice, that he had ſerved againſt it." (Ezek. xxix. 18.)

Having fled to the colonies, from the victorious army of Babylon, the Tyrians *found*, in theſe places, *no reſt*. According to Megaſthenes, who lived, about three hundred years before Chriſt, and wrote the hiſtory of Nebuchadnezzar, this king, it is evident, purſued the Tyrians from one country to another, and ſuffered them to enjoy no tranquillity.

To all, acquainted with the Roman hiſtory, it is plain, that the deſcendants of the Tyrians, in Sicily and Spain, in Europe and Africa, were continually and greatly harraſſed, and finally conquered, by the Romans. And, hence, the prophecy, it is manifeſt, was fulfilling, in every age, and in every place, where the miſerable fugi-

tives fled for ſhelter. So faithful is God, to accompliſh the words of his prophets!

That Tyre ſhould return, after ſeventy years' captivity, to her former ſplendor and ſtrength, was foreſhewn, by the prophet Iſaiah, in theſe words: "And it ſhall come to paſs, in that day, that Tyre ſhall be forgotten ſeventy years; and after the end of ſeventy years, Tyre ſhall ſing, as an harlot, and ſhe ſhall turn to her hire." (Iſa. xxiii. 15. 17.) From the deſtruction of Tyre to the taking of Babylon, by Cyrus, was exactly ſeventy years. And, then, the Tyrians, with other nations, were delivered from the oppreſſive yoke of the Babylonians, and reſtored to their ancient liberties.

After the Tyrians were ſet at liberty from their oppreſſors, they built their new city, on the iſland; which, in the time of Alexander, the Grecian hero, was ſo ſtrong and populous as to impede his victorious arms, longer than any other city whatever.

But, notwithſtanding the ſtrength of her inſular ſituation, and her towers and walls, which, according to Arrianus, were one hundred and fifty feet high, and of the ſame thickneſs, ſhe was to be deſtroyed, by fire and ſword. In ſubduing the inſular Tyre, the conqueror of Aſia removed all the ſtones and timber from the old city, to make a cauſey to the iſland. And, by this mean, he not only became maſter of the new city; but, he was alſo God's inſtrument, in carrying into effect the prophecy of the entire ruin of the city on the continent.

continent. In relating theſe exertions and conqueſt of Alexander, Biſhop Pococke ſays, "It is no wonder, that there are no ſigns, of the ancient city."

That the inſular Tyre is, now, become a ruinous heap, is the unanimous voice of all, who have viſited this place. Mr. Maundrel, who went to this iſland, ſaith, "When you come to it, (the city,) you find no ſimilitude of the glory, for which it was ſo renowned in ancient times.—On the north ſide, it has an old, Turkiſh, ungarriſoned caſtle; beſide which, you ſee nothing here, but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, &c. there being not ſo much as one entire houſe left. Its preſent inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harboring themſelves in the vaults, and ſubſiſting chiefly upon fiſhing; and who ſeem to be preſerved, in this place, by Divine Providence, as a viſible argument, how God has fulfilled his word, againſt Tyre; viz. that *it ſhould be, as the top of a rock, a place for fiſhers to dry their nets on.*"*

Had the prophets lived, when each event, reſpecting Tyre, was fulfilling, and written an hiſtory of this nation, in all its periods, their narrations, for ſubſtance, would have been what they now are. It is plain, however, that they lived and propheſied, before the old city, on the continent, was taken, by Nebuchadnezzar; or the new city, on the iſland, by Alexander; or before any

* See Maundrel's Journal of his journey from Aleppo to Jeruſalem, p. 48, 49.

any of the events, of which they ſpake, had an exiſtence. To reject ſuch concluſive evidence, a man muſt be very blind and obdurate.

SECTION V.

Some Prophecies concerning EGYPT.

THAT Egypt would be conquered, by Nebuchadnezzar, was predicted, by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. When Jeremiah was in Egypt, he foretold the calamities, which the king of Babylon was about to bring upon this nation. In ſpeaking of theſe calamities, Ezekiel ſays; "Thus ſaith the Lord God, I will alſo make the multitude of Egypt to ceaſe, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, ſhall be brought to deſtroy the land; and they ſhall draw their ſwords againſt Egypt, and fill the land with the ſlain." (Ezek. xxx. 10, 11.)

As Nebuchadnezzar was, ſpecially, raiſed up by God, and furniſhed with talents and a powerful army, to puniſh the nations for their idolatry and wickedneſs; and as he had ſerved a long and hard ſervice againſt Tyre, and had been diſappointed in taking plunder, in the city, ſo the land of Egypt and its riches were given to him, to be the wages for his army. Of this gift Ezekiel

kiel propheſies, in the following words : " Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, cauſed his army to ſerve a great ſervice againſt Tyrus ; every head was made bald, and every ſhoulder was peeled ; yet, had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the ſervice, that he had ſerved againſt it. Therefore, thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon ; and he ſhall take her multitude and take her ſpoil, and take her prey, and it ſhall be the wages for his army,— for he wrought for me, ſaith the Lord God." (Ezek. xxix. 18—20.)

The fulfilment of theſe prophecies may be proved, by two authentic hiſtories ; of which one was written by Megaſthenes, and the other by Beroſus, about three hundred years before the coming of Chriſt. By the former it is ſaid, that Nebuchadnezzar conquered the greateſt part of Africa ; and the other affirms, that, having adjuſted his concerns, in Egypt, and committed the captives he had taken to the care of his friends, he returned immediately to Babylon, upon hearing of the death of his father.*

To prove that Egypt was taken, by Nebuchadnezzar, as was predicted, the teſtimony of theſe two hiſtorians is ſufficient. Other tranſactions, recorded in hiſtory, are believed on a leſs degree of evidence ; and no man is deemed credulous for giving his aſſent. To the evidence, in point,

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* See Biſhop Newton on the Prophecies, note to p. 358, 359.

ariſing from theſe two hiſtorians, great weight is added by the teſtimony of Joſephus. In ſpeaking of Nebuchadnezzar, he ſays, that, "Having ſubdued Cœlo-Syria, he waged war againſt the Ammonites and Moabites, and having conquered them, he invaded Egypt, ſlew the king, who reigned, and appointed another."*

In propheſying of Nebuchadnezzar's conquering Egypt, and the conſequences of the victory, Ezekiel ſays; "There ſhall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt." (Ch. xxx. 13.) From the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the preſent time, there have been kings, and princes, and rulers in the land of Egypt: But none of them has been taken from among the natives. Their rulers have, always, been of foreign extraction; and impoſed upon them, by the kingdoms, to whom, at different times, they have been ſubject. As this fact is well authenticated, by hiſtory, ſo we have full evidence, that the prophecy has been fulfilling, from the time of its being delivered to the preſent day.

Nebuchadnezzar, as we have ſeen, conquered this country, and made the people his tributaries, and gave them a king of his own appointment.

When Cyrus, the Perſian, overthrew the Babylonian empire, and ſucceeded in command, he marched, as Xenophon informs us,† into Egypt, and reduced the people to his authority.

According to the writings of Herodotus, Thucydides

* See his Jewiſh Antiquities, b. x. ch. xi. ſec. 7.

† See Xenophon's Cyropœd. b. i. p. 2. and b. viii. p. 137.

cydides, and Diodorus Siculus, as quoted by Biſhop Newton, the Egyptians were, ever, held in ſubjection to the Perſian kings, till the Macedonian empire overturned that of Perſia.

Without any oppoſition, the Egyptians ſubmitted to Alexander, and to the whole race of the Ptolemies, who were his ſucceſſors. So far is this from being aſſertion, without evidence, that every hiſtory of theſe times, abounds with the moſt ample teſtimony of its truth.

The authority of the Ptolemean race over Egypt, continued from the death of Alexander, about two hundred and ninety four years, and terminated in Cleopatra, who is ſo highly famed, in hiſtory, for her beauty, wit, and vices.‡

This country was, now, reduced to a Roman province, by the victorious arms of Octavius Cæſar, and continued in ſubmiſſion to the Roman government, during the term of ſix hundred and ſeventy years, to the days of Heraclius, the emperor.*

At this time, Omar, the third emperor of the Saracens, invaded Egypt, defeated and expelled the Roman armies, and obliged the whole country to ſubmit to his authority.† The religion of Mahomet was, now, introduced ; and Chriſtianity driven out, which, in fulfilment of Iſaiah's prophecy, had been eſtabliſhed, in the firſt ages of the chriſtian church.

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‡ See Prideaux' Connec. part ii. b. 8.
* This is ſaid on the credit of Dean Prideaux.
† See Ockley's Hiſtory of the Saracens, vol. i. p. 344.

The government of the Saracens over Egypt, continued to the 1250th year of the chriſtian æra; when the Mamalucs roſe in oppoſition to the caliphs and ſultans, and uſurped the ſupreme command. This government, according to Dr. Pococke, began with ſultan Ibeg, in the year of Chriſt, 1250; and continued through a ſucceſſion of twenty four Turkiſh and twenty three Mamaluc ſultans, to the year 1517.

Selim, the ninth emperor of the Turks, marched his army, this year, againſt the Mamalucs,‡ gained a complete victory, and hanged, before the gates of Cairo, ſultan Tumanbai; and, thus, annihilated their dominion in Egypt.§

In conſequence of this deciſive battle, Egypt was annexed to the Othman empire, and hath, ever ſince, remained in ſubjection to the grand ſeignior of Conſtantinople. It is governed by a Turkiſh baſhaw, with twenty four princes under him, who are advanced from ſervitude to the adminiſtration of public affairs: "A ſuperſtitious notion poſſeſſing the Egyptians, that it is decreed, by fate, that captives ſhall reign, and the natives be ſubject to them."‖

By this general account of the nations, who have ruled Egypt, from Nebuchadnezzar's conqueſt to this day, it is manifeſt, that Ezekiel was divinely inſpired, when he predicted, that, "There ſhould be no more a prince of the land of Egypt."

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‡ The Mamalucs are captives from Circaſia; carried to Egypt and ſold for the purpoſes of ſervitude and pleaſure.

§ Biſhop Pococke's Supplement; p. 30, and 49.

‖ Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 394.

The account is not ſupported by ſuppoſitions, nor aſſertions; but reſts on the teſtimonies of the moſt authentic records.

Another remark upon Ezekiel's prophecy, ſhall cloſe what we have to ſay about this nation.—Foreſeeing, by the ſpirit of prophecy, the future ſituation of Egypt, Ezekiel ſays; "And they ſhall be a baſe kingdom. It ſhall be the baſeſt of kingdoms; neither ſhall it exalt itſelf any more among the nations." (Ezek. xxix. 14, 15.)—Subjection to tyrants is a direct mean of debilitating the human faculties, and of reducing any people to ignorance, contempt, and wretchedneſs. And as the Egyptians have been ſubject to foreign maſters, for more than two thouſand years, who have, generally, been cruel, deſpotic, and vicious, it is no ſurpriſe, that ſtupidity and lazineſs, thievery and treachery, have been predominant features, in their character. The prophecy, that *Egypt ſhould be the baſeſt of kingdoms; that it ſhould not exalt itſelf any more among the nations*, has been literally fulfilled. To ſupport this aſſertion we have the unanimous voice of all writers, who have either expreſsly, or incidently, ſpoken of this nation. In deſcribing the character of the Egyptians, the famous Thevenot ſays, that, "They are exceedingly wicked, great rogues, cowardly, lazy, hypocrites—robbers, treacherous, and ſo very greedy of money, that they will kill a man for three half pence."* To the ſame purport is the teſtimony of Biſhop Pococke. "The natives of

* See Harris's Collection, vol. ii. ch. viii. p. 429.

of Egypt," ſaith the Biſhop, " are a ſlothful people, and delight in ſitting ſtill and hearing tales.—They are alſo malicious and envious to a great degree.—The love of money is ſo rooted in them, that nothing is to be done without money. They think that the greateſt villanies are expiated, when once they waſh their hands and feet. Their words paſs for nothing, either in relations, promiſes, or profeſſions of friendſhip."

When we have the concurrent voice of more than two thouſand years, to authenticate the ſervitude and baſeneſs of the Egyptians, is it poſſible to diſbelieve that Ezekiel was a true prophet? Incredulity, in this caſe, is evidence of great depravity of mind; for it proves not only *mere* oppoſition to the truth, but a determination not to be convinced by the plaineſt arguments.

SECTION VI.

DANIEL'S *Interpretation of* NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S *Dream.*

DANIEL's prophecies have been, ſo exactly, fulfilled, that many oppoſers of Chriſtianity have aſſerted, *they were written after the events took place.* This objection againſt Chriſtianity was, firſt, raiſed by Porphyry: But, with all his learning, he was unable to ſupport it.

Daniel's

Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, has been, juſtly, viewed as a concluſive argument, in favor of revelation. By this interpretation, were unfolded to ſight ſome of the moſt important events, that were to happen, in the four great monarchies of the world. And as he deſcribed, with ſuch exactitude, theſe intereſting ſcenes, it is evident, that he was under inſpiration from the omniſcient God. And to this ſource Daniel attributes the knowledge, which he had to give a juſt interpretation of the dream.

The king of Babylon had a dream, which perplexed his mind, and arouſed him from his ſleep. As the impreſſions made, by the dream, were gone from his mind, he ſent for the wiſe men of Babylon to make known unto him the dream and its interpretation. Being unable to comply with the king's demand, Daniel, of the captivity of Judah, to whom God had revealed the dream and its interpretation, was brought into his preſence.

"Thou, O king," ſays Daniel, "ſaweſt, and behold, a great image. This great image, whoſe brightneſs was excellent, ſtood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. The image's head was of fine gold, and his breaſt and his arms of ſilver, his belly and his thighs of braſs, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.—Thou ſaweſt, till that a ſtone was cut out without hands, which ſmote the image upon his feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the braſs, the ſilver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and be-

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came like the chaff of the ſummer threſhing floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them : And the ſtone, that ſmote the image, became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (Dan. ii. 31—35.)

Having revealed to the king his dream, Daniel proceeds in giving the interpretation. The golden head of the image, was a repreſentation, ſaid the prophet, of the Babylonian empire, of which Nebuchadnezzar and his ſucceſſors were the rulers. *Thou art this head of gold*, ſaid Daniel to the king.

The account, which Daniel gives of the Babylonian empire, correſponds with the deſcription of it, contained in ancient hiſtory. In his firſt book againſt Apion, Joſephus hath quoted Beroſus, who ſaith, that Nebuchadnezzar held in ſubjection Egypt, Syria, Phœnicia, Arabia, and by his exploits ſurpaſſed all the Chaldeans and Babylonians, who reigned before him. Philoſtratus and Megaſthenes, as noticed by Biſhop Newton, ſay, that Nebuchadnezzar exceeded Hercules, in fortitude and greatneſs of exploits, and that he ſubdued the greateſt part of Lybia and Spain.

The breaſt and arms of this image were *of ſilver ;* and their being of ſilver was an emblematical repreſentation, that another kingdom ſhould ariſe after the deſtruction of the Babylonian empire, which ſhould be inferior to it. That the Perſian empire overthrew and ſucceeded the Babylonian, is a fact well ſupported by hiſtory. And although it was a ſtrong and powerful kingdom,

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and extended its conquefts and dominion over a great part of Afia, and a part of Africa ; yet, it never equalled, in magnitude and glory, the Babylonian. As the value of filver is inferior to gold, and as the filver breaft and arms were an hieroglyphic repreſentation of the Perſian empire, ſo it was revealed to Daniel, that this empire would be inferior to that of Babylon. It was inferior in extent of dominion. It was inferior in the greatneſs of military deeds. And it was inferior in the bravery, magnanimity, and virtue of its monarchs. For, although the monarchs of Babylon are ſaid to have been cruel and debauched ; yet, thoſe of Perſia were much more vicious and deſpotic. In his Connection of Sacred and Profane Hiſtory, Dean Prideaux ſaith, that, "The kings of Perſia were the worſt race of men, that ever governed an empire." With this deſcription agrees every writer, who has given an account of theſe kings.

The Macedonian was the third great monarchy, that exiſted in the world. As it overturned the Perſian empire, ſo it exerciſed dominion over all thoſe nations, who had been ſubject to it.— The Macedonians, or Grecians, were diſtinguiſhed for their brazen armor. They were, generally, called *the brazen coated Grecians*. And, hence, as *the belly and thighs* of Nebuchadnezzar's image were *of braſs*, and as the Macedonians defeated Darius Codomanus, the laſt king of Perſia, and uſurped his government, ſo we may

view this expreſſion, as a proper figure to denote the Macedonian empire.

According to Daniel's interpretation of the dream, *the brazen belly and thighs* of the image were a figurative repreſentation, that *another third kingdom of braſs* would ariſe, which ſhould *bear rule over all the earth.* Alexander was the firſt king of the Grecian, or Macedonian, monarchy. He gained poſſeſſion and dominion in all the known parts of the world. He ordered his ſubjects to call him *king of the world.* And hiſtorians tell us, that ambaſſadors came from almoſt all countries, either to congratulate him for his victories, or to ſubmit to his authority. By theſe tokens of ſubmiſſion and adulation, he gave evidence of being ruler of both ſea and land.

The fourth great monarchy was emblematically repreſented, by *the legs and feet* of the image. *His legs*, ſays Daniel, *were of iron, and his feet part of iron and part of clay.* The interpretation is in the following words: "And the fourth kingdom ſhall be ſtrong as iron: Foraſmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and ſubdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all theſe, ſhall it break in pieces, and bruiſe: And whereas thou ſaweſt the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron; the kingdom ſhall be divided; but there ſhall be in it of the ſtrength of iron; foraſmuch as thou ſaweſt the iron mixed with miry clay.—And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay; the kingdom ſhall be partly ſtrong, and partly broken. And whereas thou ſaweſt i-

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ron mixed with miry clay, they ſhall mingle themſelves with the ſeed of men : But they ſhall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." (Ver. 40—43.)

The Roman empire, it is well known, ſucceeded the Grecian. And as iron breaketh in pieces and ſubdueth all things, ſo the power of Rome overcame and ſubdued all the nations, who had been, once, ſubject to the three former monarchies. The two conſuls of Rome were repreſented, it is thought, by the two iron legs of the image ; and the ten kingdoms, into which the empire was, at length, divided, were repreſented, by the ten toes.

In his interpretation, the prophet ſays, that the kingdom ſhall *be partly ſtrong, and partly broken.* This circumſtance was denoted, by the legs of the image, that *were part of iron and part of clay.* This ſtrength and weakneſs of the empire was, happily, expreſſed by this compoſition of iron and clay. It was ſtrong, as it conquered all nations. And it was weak, or broken, as animoſities conſtantly exiſted between the patricians and plebeians, the tribunes and conſuls. In the latter times of the empire, the armies created and depoſed the emperors ; and, at public auction, they ſet the empire to ſale to the higheſt bidder. The northern nations of Europe made frequent incurſions, laid waſte the Roman provinces, ſacked and ſubdued Rome, under Alaricus the Goth ; and from theſe confuſions and revolutions aroſe the German empire, which is but the Roman empire

continued,

continued, in other hands ; and which, at this day, is known to be weak.

" In the days of theſe kings," ſaith Daniel, " ſhall the God of heaven ſet up a kingdom, which ſhall never be deſtroyed ; and the kingdom ſhall not be left to other people ; but it ſhall break in pieces and conſume all theſe kingdoms, and it ſhall ſtand forever." (Ver. 44.)

The kingdom of Chriſt was erected, at the time when the Roman empire was in the height of its power and glory. The Meſſiah was born, in the reign of Auguſtus Cæſar, and he began to preach the goſpel of the kingdom of heaven, in the reign of Tiberius Cæſar. This kingdom of heaven is totally different from all the kingdoms of this world, in its nature, laws, ſervice, character of its ſubjects, and its durability. Like a ſtone cut out of the mountain without hands, the kingdom of heaven was erected, by the immediate power of God, in oppoſition to all human authority, and in the midſt of perſecution and diſtreſs.

The kingdom of heaven was fitly repreſented, by *a ſtone cut out of the mountain without hands ;* for the chriſtian church is the building of God, an houſe not made with hands. As a ſtone is noted for its durability ; ſo the kingdom of Chriſt will endure forever. And as the ſtone, in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, ſmote the image, and became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth : ſo the kingdom of Chriſt will ſmite and break in pieces the kingdoms of this world. The

time

time will ſhortly come, it is plain from prophecy, when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Chriſt, and he ſhall reign forever. (Rev. xi. 15.)

A view of theſe four monarchies was, again, repreſented to Daniel, in a viſion he had of *four great beaſts*, which *came up from the ſea, divers one from another.* (See ch. vii. 3.) The firſt beaſt was like a lion; the ſecond, like a bear; the third, like a leopard; and the fourth was dreadful and terrible, and ſtrong exceedingly.

The firſt beaſt, being like *a lion*, and having eagle's wings, has been, generally, underſtood, by expoſitors, to be a figurative repreſentation of the Babylonian monarchy. The king of Babylon is called, by Jeremiah, *a lion*, and he is ſaid *to fly as an eagle.* (Jer. iv. 7. and xlviii. 40.)

As the Perſians were a fierce, cruel, and blood-thirſty nation, ſo they were, fitly, repreſented, in the viſion, by *a bear;* which is a moſt ravenous beaſt. The Perſians are deſcribed, by Herodotus as *being proud, cruel, and exerciſing the power of life and death over ſlaves and the loweſt of the people;* as *ſlaying them alive, and having a law, by which a whole vicinity muſt be deſtroyed, for the crime of one man.*

As the Grecians were to march through the Perſian empire, with amazing rapidity and violence, and to deſtroy armies and cities, without much oppoſition, ſo they were, properly, repreſented, by *a leopard;* which is an active ſwift beaſt, and fears not to encounter even *the lion*,

called the king of beaſts. This leopard had four heads, which denoted, as writers on prophecy have proved, that the Grecian empire ſhould be divided, after the death of Alexander, into four kingdoms. And, accordingly, this empire was divided between Caſſander, Lyſimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus, who were Alexander's generals.

To the fourth beaſt no name was given, but that of being *dreadful and terrible, and ſtrong exceedingly ; and having great iron teeth, and ſtamping the reſidue with his feet.* As this beaſt was not only terrible and deſtructive, but divers from all before it, having ten horns, ſo it properly repreſented the Roman power, whoſe armies carried terror and death among all nations, and conquered wherever they went. In its republican form of government, it was divers from the other three great monarchies. In the latter times of the Roman government, this empire, according to hiſtory, was divided into ten kingdoms, which event was preſignified, by the ten horns, belonging to this terrible beaſt.

From this ſhort view of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and his viſion of the four beaſts, it is very plain, that God made him acquainted with the events of futurity. The argument, in favor of Chriſtianity, ariſing from Daniel's prophecy, is ſo concluſive, that the oppoſers of Chriſtianity, in every period of the church, have exerted all their abilities to prove, that they were only a deſcription of paſt events.

From

From this ſentiment of the oppoſers, it is, hence, plain, that the prophecy is evidence ſo concluſive, that to prove it was written after the events, is the only method to evade its force. But they may as well attempt to prove, that Tacitus wrote his Roman hiſtory, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, as that the prophecy of Daniel has been written ſince the deſtruction of the empires, of which he propheſied. That Daniel lived and uttered prophecies, in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, is as manifeſt, as that Tacitus lived in the days of Veſpaſian and Titus, and wrote the Roman hiſtory. Infidels are, therefore, reduced to this alternative, either to believe in the divine inſpiration of the ſcriptures, or to reject all evidence ariſing from hiſtory. The latter they dare not do; and to the former they are wholly averſe.

SECTION VII.

The Prophecies reſpecting the MESSIAH, *his Perſon, Birth, Character, Work, Kingdom, Life, and Death.*

THE Old Teſtament contains many gracious promiſes of the coming of a glorious perſon, to eſtabliſh a diſpenſation of grace, and to redeem men from the dominion of ſin. As theſe promiſes

were

were all made, ages before Jeſus Chriſt was born, and as they have had their full and complete accompliſhment, in him, and in him *alone ;* ſo we have the moſt clear and rational evidence, that the ancient prophets, who predicted all the circumſtances, relating to the Meſſiah, were divinely inſpired. To exhibit this evidence, in full view, we ſhall mention, in order, ſome of theſe prophetic promiſes, and then ſhew, that they were all accompliſhed, in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt.

I. That the Meſſiah was to be a very illuſtrious perſon, was predicted by the prophets. This circumſtance was predicted by the prophet Iſaiah. Speaking of the future reign of righteouſneſs, this prophet ſays ; " unto us a child is born, unto us a ſon is given, and the government ſhall be upon his ſhoulder ; and his name ſhall be called Wonderful, Counſellor, the mighty God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increaſe of his kingdom and peace there ſhall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to eſtabliſh it with judgment and with juſtice, from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hoſts will perform this." (Iſa. ix. 6, 7.) In the moſt pleaſing ſtrains is the ſame illuſtrious perſon deſcribed, in the followed words : " And there ſhall come forth a rod out of the ſtem of Jeſſe, and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots ; and the ſpirit of the Lord ſhall reſt upon him, the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding, the ſpirit of counſel and might, the ſpirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord ;

and

and ſhall make him of quick underſtanding in the fear of the Lord. And he ſhall not judge after the ſight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteouſneſs ſhall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: And he ſhall ſmite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips ſhall he ſlay the wicked." (Iſa. xi. 1—4.) Of the ſame illuſtrious perſon the prophet Jeremiah ſpeaks thus; "Behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will raiſe unto David a righteous branch, and a king ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute judgment and juſtice, in the earth.—And this is the name whereby he ſhall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Ch. xxiii. 5, 6.)*

II. According to the prophecies, this illuſtrious perſon was to be born, before the total deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the diſperſion of the Jews, among all nations. This event was preſignified, by the prophet Haggai, in theſe words: "Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will ſhake the heavens, and the earth, and the ſea, and the dry land; and I will ſhake all nations, and the deſire of all nations ſhall come; and I will fill this houſe with glory, ſaith the Lord. The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater, than that of the former, ſaith the Lord." (Hag. ii. 6, 7. 9.) The prophet Daniel fixes the exact time, when

* The reader is deſired to conſult theſe texts; Jer. xxxiii. 15, 16. Ezek. xxxiv. 23—27. Zech. ix. 9, 10. Dan. vii. 13, 14.

when the Meſſiah ſhould be born. Referring to the Jewiſh captivity, in Babylon, he ſays; "Seventy weeks* are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finiſh the tranſgreſſion, and to make an end of ſins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs, and to ſeal up the viſion and prophecy, and to anoint the moſt Holy. Know, therefore, and underſtand, that from the going forth of the commandment to reſtore and to build Jeruſalem, unto Meſſiah the Prince, ſhall be ſeven weeks, and threeſcore and two weeks." (Dan. ix. 24, 25.)

III. That the Meſſiah was to be born of a virgin, a deſcendant from David, and in the town of Bethlehem, was expreſsly foretold, by the prophets. Speaking of Chriſt's appearance, the prophet Iſaiah ſays; "Behold, a virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon, and ſhall call his name IMMANUEL." (Iſa. vii. 14.) The place of his nativity is fixed by Micah, in theſe words: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thouſands of Judah, yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Iſrael; whoſe goings forth have been from of old, from everlaſting." (Mic. v. 2.)

IV. This illuſtrious perſon was to be diſtinguiſhed, according to prophecy, by the performance of the moſt humane and aſtoniſhing works. This is clearly expreſſed, by Iſaiah, in theſe words:

"Strengthen

* Seventy prophetic weeks were ſeventy years: The time of the Babylonian captivity.

" Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them, that are of a fearful heart, Be ſtrong, fear not.—Then the eyes of the blind ſhall be opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall be unſtopped ; then ſhall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb ſing." (Iſa. xxxv. 3. 5, 6.) He was to *bear the griefs and carry the ſorrows* of men. (See Iſa. liii. 3.) This was accompliſhed, when Chriſt *went about all the cities and villages,—healing every ſickneſs and every diſeaſe among the people.* For then, according to Matthew, was fulfilled, what was ſpoken by Eſaias the prophet, ſaying, Himſelf took our infirmities, and bear our ſickneſſes. (Matt. viii. 17.)

V. In the prophecies, it was foretold, that the Meſſiah's kingdom of truth and peace, would extend over all the world. The prophecies about the nature of the goſpel kingdom, and its extenſive influence, are ſo many, that we ſhall refer to a few only. To the Son the Father promiſed, "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermoſt parts of the earth for thy poſſeſſion." (Pſ. ii. 8.) Deſcribing the glory and extent of this kingdom, the prophet David ſays ; " In his days ſhall the righteous flouriſh ; and abundance of peace ſo long as the moon endureth. He ſhall have dominion alſo from ſea to ſea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. The kings of Tarſhiſh and of the iſles ſhall bring preſents ; the kings of Sheba and Seba ſhall offer gifts. Yea, all kings ſhall fall down before him ; all nations ſhall ſerve him." (Pſ. lxxii. 7—11.) The ſixtieth

chapter

chapter of Iſaiah's prophecy contains a moſt animated and beautiful deſcription of the extent, holineſs, and tranquillity of Chriſt's kingdom on earth. The reader will find a ſimilar deſcription, in the ſecond, eleventh, and ſixty-ſixth chapters of the ſame book. Of all the prophets Iſaiah was the moſt particular in ſpeaking of the promiſed Meſſiah, and his reign of righteouſneſs on earth. For this reaſon, he has been called the evangelical prophet. And for this reaſon, it is thought, he has been ſo ſhamefully abuſed, by deiſtical writers.

VI. That the Meſſiah would be deſpiſed, perſecuted, and put to death, was minutely foretold, by the prophets; who alſo ſpake of many circumſtances, attending theſe ſcenes.

1. That he would be deſpiſed, was predicted by Iſaiah, in theſe words: "He ſhall grow up before him, as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty, that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed and rejected of men; a man of ſorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him: He was deſpiſed and we eſteemed him not." (Iſa. liii. 2, 3.) Of the ſame import are the words of the Pſalmiſt: "I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and deſpiſed of the people. All they, that ſee me, laugh me to ſcorn: They ſhoot out the lip, they ſhake the head." (Pſ. xxii. 6, 7.) The ſixty ninth Pſalm is evidently a prophetic deſcription of the Meſſiah and his ſufferings. And, accordingly, the royal

prophet

prophet ſays ; " When I wept and chaſtened my ſoul with faſting, that was to my reproach ;—and I became a proverb to them. They, that ſit in the gate,* ſpeak againſt me ; and I was the ſong of the drunkards.—Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heavineſs." (Pſ. lxix. 10. 12. 20.)

2. That the people and rulers of the Jews, together with the heathen, would combine to oppoſe and perſecute the Savior, was propheſied, by way of queſtion, in the ſecond Pſalm : " Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? The kings of the earth do ſet themſelves, and the rulers take counſel together againſt the Lord, and againſt his anointed."

3. By the prophet Zechariah it was predicted, that the Son of God would be ſold for thirty pieces of ſilver. Speaking of this event the prophet ſays ; " And I ſaid unto them, If ye think good, give me my price ; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of ſilver. And the Lord ſaid unto me, A goodly price, that I was prized at by them ! And I took the thirty pieces of ſilver, and caſt them to the potter, in the houſe of the Lord." (Ch. xi. 12, 13.)

4. That he would be betrayed by his own intimate friend, was predicted, by the royal pſalmiſt. Foreſeeing, by the Holy Ghoſt, the deceit and treachery of Judas, David ſays : " Yea, mine

* Among the Iſraelites it was cuſtomary for judges to hold their courts, in the gates of the cities. They are the perſons here deſcribed.

own familiar friend in whom I truſted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel againſt me." (Pſ. xli. 9.) "He hath put forth his hands againſt ſuch as be at peace with him; he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were ſmoother than butter, but war was in his heart: His words were ſofter than oil, yet were they drawn ſwords." (Pſ. lv. 20, 21.)

5. That vinegar would be given him to drink, is mentioned in the ſixty ninth Pſalm." "They gave me alſo," ſays the prophetic king, "gall for my meat; and in my thirſt, they gave me vinegar to drink."

6. That his bones would not be broken was foreſhown, in the thirty fourth Pſalm. Speaking of the particular care of God over the Savior, the prophet ſays; "He keepeth all his bones: Not one of them is broken." (Pſ. xxxiv. 20.)

7. That the Meſſiah would be pierced is mentioned, in the twenty ſecond Pſalm; which is, generally, allowed to be a prophetic deſcription of the amazing ſcene of Chriſt's crucifixion. Having this ſcene in view, the prophet ſays; "The aſſembly of the wicked have incloſed me: They pierced my hands and my feet." (Pſ. xxii. 16.) And the prophet Zechariah, foreſeeing the repentance of ſome of the Jews, for their inhumanity toward the Redeemer, ſays; "And I will pour upon the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplications, and they ſhall look upon me, whom they have pierced. (Zech. xii. 10.)

8. That

8. That the Savior's garments would be parted, was made known to the ancient ſaints, in the twenty ſecond Pſalm. "They part my garments among them," ſays the prophecy, "and caſt lots upon my veſture."

9. That he would be put to death with tranſgreſſors, and be buried with the rich, was declared by the prophet Iſaiah, in the fifty third chapter of his prophecy.

10. That he would riſe from the grave, before his body ſaw corruption, was particularly mentioned, by the prophet David, in the ſixteenth Pſalm. "My fleſh ſhall reſt in hope," ſays David of the Meſſiah; "for thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell;* neither wilt thou ſuffer thine Holy One to ſee corruption."

11. That he would aſcend into heaven, was predicted in theſe words: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlaſting doors; and the king of glory ſhall come in." (Pſ. xxiv. 7.) But the triumphant aſcenſion of Chriſt to glory, is more plainly deſcribed, in the ſixty eighth Pſalm: "Thou haſt aſcended on high," ſays the prediction, "thou haſt led captivity captive; thou haſt received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious alſo, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

Having ſtated the predictions reſpecting the Meſſiah, his perſon, and many circumſtances of his life and death, we ſhall, now, ſhew, that they were

* *Hades*, or *the grave*.

were all accompliſhed, in the perſon of Jeſus of Nazareth. And,

1. That Jeſus of Nazareth was an illuſtrious perſon, is apparent from the hiſtory of his perſon and character, as contained in the New Teſtament. If as much credit may be given to the writings of the four evangeliſts, as is uſually given to other biographical writings, then the ſon of Mary was, certainly, a very diſtinguiſhed and extraordinary perſon. In his biography, written by the evangeliſts, it is ſaid, that *he was before Abraham; that he came forth and proceeded from God; that God ſanctified and ſent him into the world; that the world was made by him; that he is the light of the world; that he is the way, the truth, and the life; that he is the true ſhepherd; that he is the Son of God; that he and his father are one; and that authority was given him to execute judgment.* The moral and ſocial virtues ſo eminently ſhone, in Chriſt, that his moſt bitter enemies have been forced to acknowledge the rectitude of his heart, and the innocence of his life.

2. Without recurring to the New Teſtament, it is manifeſt from other hiſtories, that *the Meſſiah was born before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the diſperſion of the Jews among all nations.* In ſpeaking of ſome actions of Pilate's life, Joſephus ſaith, that, "At the ſame time, there was one Jeſus, a wiſe man, if at leaſt a man he may be called. He was a great worker of miracles, and teacher of thoſe, that were curious, and deſirous to learn the truth; and he had a great many followers,

lowers, both Jews and Gentiles. This was the Chriſt, that was accuſed, by the princes and great men of our nation." (B. iii. p. 131.) That Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and that Jeſus Chriſt was brought in judgment before him, is the teſtimony of Tacitus. Other teſtimonies, of a ſimilar nature, might be quoted from heathen authors. But the quotations are needleſs. For that Chriſt was born, in the reign of Auguſtus Cæſar, and that he was crucified, in the reign of Tiberius Cæſar, are facts as well authenticated, as the moſt credible facts in the beſt hiſtories. Auguſtus Cæſar was emperor of Rome, about ſeventy years before Jeruſalem was taken by Titus. And Pilate was governor, about forty years before this event. And, of courſe, the prophecies, that Chriſt ſhould appear before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and diſperſion of the Jews, among all nations, have been fully accompliſhed. And, therefore, the men, who uttered theſe prophecies, were the true prophets of the true God; for he only can give the knowledge of futurity.

3. According to the accounts of Matthew and Luke, the Meſſiah was born of the Virgin Mary. That Mary was found with child of the Holy Ghoſt, before ſhe was married to Joſeph, is the teſtimony of Matthew. Luke ſays, that the Holy Ghoſt came upon her, and the power of the Higheſt overſhadowed her; and, therefore, her child was called the Son of God. That the Jews were exceedingly careful to preſerve all the genealogies of their families, needs no proof. Ac-

cording to theſe, the Virgin Mary ſprung, in a direct line, from David. And, hence, the angel ſays to Mary ; " Thou ſhalt bring forth a ſon.—And he ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the Son of the Higheſt ; and the Lord God ſhall give unto him the throne of his father David." (Luk. i. 31, 32.)

By reaſon of the taxing made in the reign of Auguſtus Cæſar, Joſeph and Mary, who were of the houſe and lineage of David, " went up from Galilee," ſays Luke, " out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem." And while they were in this city, Mary brought forth her firſt born ſon, who is Chriſt, the Lord. And then was fulfilled the prediction of the prophet Micah, that the ruler of Iſrael was to be born, in Bethlehem Ephratah.

4. To fulfil the prophecies, that were ſpoken of him, it behoved Jeſus Chriſt to do works of a ſurpriſing and miraculous nature. And, accordingly, we find, that he gave ſight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, that he diſpoſſeſſed the devils, healed the ſick, by ſpeaking a word, that he cured the lunatic and palſied, the lame, the halt, and maimed ; that he calmed the raging tempeſts, walked on the waves of the ſea, told to a certainty the thoughts of men, and raiſed the dead. Credentials of this nature are ample proof that Jeſus was more than a common, ordinary man, that he was really the expected Meſſiah, the deſire of all nations. With this evidence, Celſus;

ſus, an ancient infidel, was hardly preſſed, by St. Auguſtine; and to evade its force was obliged to invent the ſcandalous ſtory, that our Lord went down into Egypt, there learned magic, and ſo wrought all his marvellous deeds, by the help of this art. A pitiful ſhift indeed! To deal in aſſertions and invent improbable ſtories, is cuſtomary with Deiſts, when ſolid arguments are urged againſt them. To prove, that Jeſus is not their promiſed Meſſiah, the Jews roundly aſſert, that Jeſus ſtole from the temple the name JEHOVAH, and that he wrought all his mighty deeds, by virtue of this divine name. But neither Jews, nor Deiſts, have been able to prove their aſſertions; and, of courſe, they are like the "baſeleſs fabric of a viſion, that leave not a wreck behind."

5. The religion, which Chriſt preached, while on earth, and the kingdom, which he eſtabliſhed, are of a ſpiritual and divine nature. In his ſermons, he taught the moſt ſublime doctrines of piety and morality; and he inculcated, with all the energy, their importance demands, meekneſs of heart, reſignation to the divine will, forgiveneſs of injuries, rectitude of conduct, benevolence towards all men, repentance of ſin, and ſincere love to the Supreme Being. This kingdom, when firſt erected, was, for ſmallneſs, like a grain of muſtard ſeed. But it grew, flouriſhed, and extended its branches over the face of all the earth. The goſpel of this kingdom was preached, in the apoſtolic age, to all nations. And the time is haſtening on, when, according to prophecy, all peo-

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ple will ſubmit to Chriſt, as king, and the reign of righteouſneſs will comprehend all the different tribes of men, in the world.

6. That the Meſſiah was deſpiſed, perſecuted, and put to death, as was foretold of him; and that all the other prophetic circumſtances of his life and death had their full accompliſhment, in him, is very plain from the moſt authentic documents.

The combination of the Jewiſh rulers againſt Chriſt, is, particularly, mentioned, by the four evangeliſts. By the ſame authority, we are told, that *he was ſold for thirty pieces of ſilver*, and that Judas, his own diſciple and *familiar friend*, betrayed him to be crucified. In recounting the circumſtances of his death, John ſays, that *they filled a ſponge with vinegar, and put it to his mouth*: that *the ſoldiers brake not his legs*; that *one of the ſoldiers pierced his ſide*; that *the ſoldiers took his garments, and made four parts, to every ſoldier a part, and alſo his coat*. And as he was ſuſpended on a croſs, it is plain, that *they pierced his hands and his feet*, with nails, as was uſually done to thoſe, who were crucified. That our Savior was crucified between two thieves is the teſtimony of Matthew and Mark. By Luke they are called malefactors. After Chriſt was dead, Joſeph of Arimathea, an honourable counſellor, went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jeſus, and laid it in his own new tomb, hewn out of a rock. That Chriſt was crucified and buried, is granted by unbelievers. But they deny that he roſe from the

grave.

grave. The fact of his reſurrection is, however, atteſted by many credible witneſſes; who were under no temptation to raiſe and report a falſehood. And, as they were competent judges, and men of the ſtricteſt integrity, ſo the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection is ſupported, beyond any reaſonable doubt.

According to the prophecies, the Meſſiah was to aſcend into glory. And that he aſcended into glory, after his reſurrection, is aſſerted, by eleven perſons, who ſaw him ariſe from this earth, and mount through the air, towards heaven, when the cloud of glory received him out of their ſight.—(Acts i. 9, 10.)

From this ſhort view of ancient prophecies, reſpecting the coming of an illuſtrious perſon into this world, and from a view of the principal circumſtances of his life and death, it is a plain inference, that the prophets, who predicted theſe events, were divinely inſpired; and it is equally as plain, that Jeſus of Nazareth is the promiſed Meſſiah. That ſo many men, in periods ſo remote, ſhould concur, in deſcribing the ſame future events, and that all their predictions ſhould have their accompliſhment, in Jeſus Chriſt, can be accounted for only on the principle, that Jeſus is a divine perſon, the Savior of men, and that the prophets were taught, by him, to whom futurity is ever preſent.

SECTION VIII.

The Prophecies, which Chriſt uttered, concerning his own Reſurrection.

THE reſurrection of Chriſt is a principal hinge, on which turns the evidence to ſupport the authenticity of the chriſtian religion. If Chriſt were actually put to death, as the ſcriptures teach, and as Deiſts acknowledge, and if he actually roſe from the grave, as Chriſtians believe; then, that the religion of the Bible is from heaven, is a conſequence, which none can deny. If Chriſt did not riſe from the grave, then the faith of Chriſtians is vain, and the preaching of the chriſtian religion is vain; and the apoſtles are falſe witneſſes: For they have teſtified, that God raiſed him from the dead. Yielding this point to infidels is overthrowing, from their foundations, both the Old and New Teſtament: For the types, and ceremonies, and promiſes, and prophecies, of the former diſpenſation, referred to the coming of the Meſſiah, and were to have their completion in him. But, if he roſe not from the grave, then he is an impoſtor, and of courſe the whole ſcheme of the Old Teſtament is deſtroyed. And as the faith of Chriſtians is built on a crucified and riſen Redeemer,

deemer, and as his reſurrection is, ſo often, aſſerted, in the New Teſtament, it will of conſequence follow, that, if Chriſt be not raiſed, this faith of Chriſtians is a mere nullity ; and the religion of the New Teſtament, a piece of ſolemn mockery.

The evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection does, hence, demand particular attention. To exhibit this evidence plainly to the mind, we ſhall,

I. State the predictions, which Chriſt uttered, concerning his own reſurrection.

II. State the ſcriptural evidence, that he did, actually, riſe from the grave. And,

III. Make ſome reflections upon the whole.

I. The predictions, which Chriſt uttered, concerning his reſurrection from the grave, are contained, in the following quotations from the evangeliſts. " From that time forth," ſays Matthew, " began Jeſus to ſhew unto his diſciples, how that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things of the elders, and chief prieſts, and ſcribes, and be killed, and be raiſed again the third day."—(Ch. xvi. 21.) " And while they abode in Galilee, Jeſus ſaid unto them, The Son of man ſhall be betrayed into the hands of men ; and they ſhall kill him, and the third day he ſhall be raiſed again." (Ch. xvii. 22, 23.) With a little variation, the ſame truth was predicted, in the following words : " Behold, we go up to Jeruſalem," ſays Chriſt to his diſciples, " and the Son of man ſhall be betrayed unto the chief prieſts, and unto the ſcribes ; and they ſhall condemn him to death,

and

and ſhall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to ſcourge, and to crucify him; and, the third day, he ſhall riſe again." (Ch. xx. 18, 19.)

To ſave time, we ſhall refer to ſome texts below;* in which the reader will perceive, that Chriſt, conſtantly, ſpake of his death and reſurrection, as events of which he had certain knowledge. The prophecies are plain and particular. They are delivered without any qualifying terms. And we have the teſtimony of three credible perſons, that they were uttered by Jeſus Chriſt.

II. We ſhall, now, ſtate the ſcriptural evidence, that Chriſt did, actually, riſe from the grave.

"In the end of the Sabbath," ſaith Matthew, "as it began to dawn towards the firſt day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to ſee the ſepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: For the angel of the Lord deſcended from heaven, and came and rolled away the ſtone, and ſat upon it.—And for fear of him the keepers did ſhake, and became as dead men. And the angel anſwered and ſaid unto the women, Fear not ye, for I know, that ye ſeek Jeſus, who was crucified. He is not here; for he is riſen, as he ſaid. Come, ſee the place, where the Lord lay. And, as they went to tell his diſciples, behold, Jeſus met them, ſaying, All hail. And they came, and held him by the feet, and worſhipped him. Then Jeſus ſaid unto them, Be not afraid; go, tell my brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there ſhall they ſee me.—

Then

*Mark viii. 31. ix. 31. x. 33. Luke ix. 22. xviii. 31.

Then the eleven diſciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jeſus had appointed them. And when they ſaw him, they worſhipped him: But ſome doubted. And Jeſus came and ſpake unto them, ſaying, All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth." (Ch. xxvii. 1—18.)

In his account of Chriſt's reſurrection, Mark agrees, in the main, with Matthew. He is, however, more particular, and ſays, that, "When Jeſus was riſen early, the firſt day of the week, he appeared firſt to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had caſt ſeven devils. After that, he appeared, in another form, unto two of them, as they walked and went into the country. Afterward, he appeared unto the eleven, as they ſat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardneſs of heart, becauſe they believed not them, who had ſeen him, after he was riſen." (Mark xvi. 9—14.)

In relating the appearance of Chriſt, after the angels had told the women, that he was riſen from the dead, Luke particularly mentions the journey of two of Chriſt's diſciples to Emmaus, and Chriſt's walking and converſing with them, and expounding unto them, in all the ſcriptures, the things concerning himſelf; and his opening their eyes, and their knowing him to be the crucified Redeemer. Theſe two perſons related this appearance to the eleven. "And, as they ſpake, Jeſus himſelf ſtood in the midſt of them, and ſaith unto them, Peace be unto you. And they were terrified, and affrighted, and ſuppoſed, that they

had ſeen a ſpirit. And he ſaid unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts ariſe in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myſelf. Handle me, and ſee; for a ſpirit hath not fleſh and bones, as ye ſee me have. And when he had thus ſpoken, he ſhewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he ſaid, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fiſh, and of an honey comb. And he took it, and did eat before them. (Luke xxiv. 13—43.)

John mentions three diſtinct appearances of Chriſt to his diſciples, after he roſe from the dead; and his appearing once to Mary Magdalene, as ſhe turned from the ſepulchre. To his diſciples he appeared, firſt, at evening, being the firſt day of the week: And ſhewed them his hands and his ſide. After eight days, he appeared again to his diſciples, as they were aſſembled together in a private room, for fear of the Jews. To ſeven of his diſciples Jeſus appeared, the third time, on the ſea ſhore of Tiberias, and eat and converſed with them for a long time. Theſe four appearances of our Savior are circumſtantially related, by John, in the twentieth and twenty firſt chapters of the goſpel, according to him; to which the reader is referred.

We are told, by Luke, in the Acts of the Apoſtles, (ch. i. 3.) that Jeſus "ſhewed himſelf alive, after his paſſion, by many infallible proofs, being ſeen *of his diſciples*, forty days, and ſpeaking

ing of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." In his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, (ch. xv. 5, 6.) Paul ſays, that Chriſt "was ſeen of Cephas, then of the twelve; after that he was ſeen of above five hundred brethren, at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this preſent (time); but ſome are fallen aſleep."

III. Having ſtated the ſcriptural evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection, we ſhall, now, make ſome reflections on the whole.

Againſt the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection, it has been objected, by infidels, that his diſciples came, in the night, and ſtole away his body, while the guard was aſleep. This report was firſt ſpread, by ſome of the guard; and it was well known for what purpoſe the ſtory was invented. The high prieſts, it is evident, had conviction, that Jeſus was, really, riſen from the grave. And to prevent what they deemed the pernicious effects of his reſurrection, they gave money to the ſoldiers, to pay them for raiſing a moſt ſcandalous and improbable ſtory. It may, ſeriouſly, be aſked, How did the ſoldiers know, that the diſciples ſtole away the body, while they were aſleep? By whom was this information given to them? Do men, in their ſleep, know what others are doing around them? The fact is, altogether, improbable. The ſtory has not even the color of truth. Beſide, that the diſciples of Chriſt ſhould attempt to ſteal away his body from the tomb, is deſtitute of the leaſt probability. They were a feeble, deſpiſed, and ſcattered band. They knew, that the high prieſts had

had placed, at the tomb, a guard of ſoldiers.—They knew, that a very large ſtone was rolled againſt the mouth of the tomb, and ſealed. And they might well know, that the ſeal could not be broken, and the ſtone rolled away, without making a great noiſe. Knowing all theſe circumſtances, they muſt be ſenſible, that the body of Jeſus could not be taken out of the tomb, and conveyed away, without being diſcovered, by the ſoldiers; whom they might well conſider as being attentive to their duty. That the diſciples of Chriſt ſhould attempt, in this ſituation, to ſteal the body of their Maſter, is, hence, a moſt inconſiſtent and improbable undertaking. Its truth depends, for ſupport, wholly on aſſertion and conjecture.

That Jeſus Chriſt was crucified and raiſed from the dead, is a fact, acknowledged by Joſephus, the famous Jewiſh hiſtorian, who was never thought to be friendly to the Chriſtians. In ſpeaking of Jeſus Chriſt, he ſays, that, "He was ſeen alive, again, the third day after his crucifixion, as had been foretold, by ſeveral prophets."*

After his reſurrection, Chriſt made his firſt appearance to a few women, who had come, early in the morning, to the ſepulchre, to anoint his body. That the body of Jeſus was not in the ſepulchre, theſe women had the teſtimony of their own ſight. And being diſtreſſed, becauſe his body was not there, they were told, by the angels, that he was, actually, riſen. When they were returning to the city, to carry the tidings to his diſciples,

* Vol iii. b. xviii. p. 131.

disciples, Jesus met them, in the way ; which was his first appearance, except his manifesting himself to Mary, at the tomb.

After this, and during the space of forty days, Christ frequently appeared to his followers, conversed with them, and ate in their presence.

To say, that these appearances were all delusion, or the effects of a heated imagination, is saying what cannot be proved. All the witnesses of the resurrection, appear to have been in the sober exercise of their senses. They were surprised, it is true, at the first appearance of their Lord. But the surprise arose from the apprehension, that he was a ghost, and not from any suspicion of deceit.

Should it be, still, urged, that the body of Jesus was stolen from the sepulchre, and that the pretended witnesses combined together to carry on the imposture ; it may be answered, that an imposture, in this case, is destitute of the least show of probability. One or two persons, it is granted, may frame groundless reports, and, for a while, escape without detection. But, that five hundred persons should enter into a combination of fabricating and spreading a known falsehood, that no one of the number should ever divulge the secret, and that the most bitter and vigilant enemies should never be able to detect the imposition, exceeds all belief.

When the report of Christ's resurrection was, first, spread abroad, it became his opposers to examine all the minute circumstances, and shew the

world, in what the deceit lay. But no ſuch examination was ever had. Neither the rulers of the Jews' nor any enemies of Chriſtianity, at any time ſince, have been able to undeceive the world, by plain, ſolid, proof, that Chriſt did not actually riſe from the grave. To make men believe, that Chriſt did not riſe, that the whole ſcene was a piece of ſolemn mockery, their ears have, indeed, been filled with ſurmiſes, conjectures, and aſſertions; at which weapons infidels are very expert. But aſſerting and proving, it is well known, are wholly different. To undeceive impartial men, to impreſs their minds with truth, when miſled by error, ſomething is neceſſary, beſide mere aſſertion and conjecture.

During the apoſtolic age, the Jewiſh nation, it is manifeſt, gave a ſilent aſſent to the teſtimony of the witneſſes. None of their hiſtorians, nor cotemporaries, among the heathen, ever attempted to bring any proof againſt the fact of Chriſt's riſing from the grave. Joſephus, we have ſeen, confeſſes, that he did riſe. The high prieſts and ſenate of Iſrael, to whom the apoſtles boldly declared that God had raiſed *him*, from the dead, *whom* they had taken, and by wicked hands had crucified and ſlain, might, it ſeems, have detected the impoſture, if any there had been. But, inſtead of contradicting the evidence adduced, by the apoſtles, inſtead of making the leaſt exertions to diſcover and expoſe the pretended cheat, they uſed only threatenings and ſcourgings.*

To

* See Acts v. 40.

To ſubſtantiate any fact a number of witneſſes is requiſite. If they are perſons of veracity, if they have proper means of information, and are capable of diſtinguiſhing between truth and error, their teſtimony is admitted by impartial men, as ſufficiently valid. Apply this definition to the witneſſes of Chriſt's reſurrection, and it will appear, that the fact is amply proved. For the witneſſes were perſons of the ſtricteſt integrity and veracity. Amidſt all the clamor raiſed againſt them, their moral characters remain unſullied. That they had proper means of information, is very evident: For they often ſaw their riſen Lord, they converſed with him, they ſaw him eat, and, by the ſenſe of feeling, they were fully convinced, that he had a real body. Except the apoſtle Paul, they were, it is granted, illiterate men. But illiterate men can as well diſtinguiſh truth from error, as men of letters. There ſenſe of ſeeing, and hearing, and feeling, is as keen, as is the ſenſe of philoſophers and metaphyſicians; and their teſtimony, or depoſition, to authenticate any fact, will be admitted as ſoon, as the teſtimony of learned men. No objection, therefore, can lie againſt the witneſſes, becauſe they belonged to the lower claſs of people.

As no objection can lie againſt the character of the witneſſes; ſo neither can there be any againſt the number. During the forty days of Chriſt's being in this world, after his reſurrection, he appeared, ſometimes, to two perſons, ſometimes to ſeven, ſometimes to the eleven apoſtles, and once

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to five hundred perſons, of whom the greater part were alive, when Paul, in the year 56, wrote his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians.* Should it be ſaid, that, to put the truth of his reſurrection beyond any diſpute, Chriſt ought to have appeared publicly to the whole nation of the Jews, at ſome of their ſolemn feſtivals in Jeruſalem, it may be replied, that had he made an appearance as public as this, yet neither the tongues, nor pens, of infidels would have been ſilent. For, if they will not credit the teſtimony of five hundred perſons, neither would they credit the teſtimony of as many millions.

The witneſſes teſtify to a fact, of which they declare, that they had particular, perſonal, knowledge. And this knowledge was obtained, not by one ſingle appearance; but by a number of appearances, through a ſeries of forty days, in which time Jeſus gave the moſt ſenſible and concluſive evidence, that he was really riſen.

In the moſt ſolemn and religious manner did the apoſtles bear teſtimony to the truth of Chriſt's reſurrection. To the omniſcient Deity, who underſtands all the motives and actions of men, did they appeal, in bearing witneſs to the world, that he had raiſed up his Son from the dead. If they were impoſtors, if they aſſerted for truth what they knew to be falſe, they were, ſurely, a ſet of the greateſt villains, that ever lived. But, when men of unblemiſhed character, (and the apoſtles were certainly men of this character) appeal to God

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

God for the truth of their declarations, they ought to gain credit, and they will gain credit with impartial judges.

Their teſtimony was not given, in obſcure and ſecret places. But they appeared publicly, in Jeruſalem, before the great council of the nation, in the preſence of his crucifiers, before the kings and rulers of the earth, and before vaſt concourſes of people, wherever they went preaching the goſpel, and boldly teſtified, that Chriſt had, often, appeared alive, after his reſurrection; and had commanded them to preach repentance and faith, in his name, to all nations.

In making this declaration, they could not be under the influence of ſelfiſh motives. They knew the pride and virulence of the Jewiſh rulers. They knew the ſuperſtition and haughtineſs of the heathen philoſophers, and the ignorance and depravity of the common people. And, hence, they muſt rationally conclude, that, wherever they went, they would be expoſed to contempt and perſecution. In preaching the doctrine of a crucified and riſen Savior, there was nothing to gratify the curioſity of the philoſophers, to pleaſe the vanity of the common people, nor to gain the approbation of Jew, or Greek. Poverty and ſhame, ridicule and hatred, perſecution and death, were the conſequences, the apoſtles knew, of boldly teſtifying the doctrines of the croſs.

From the above conſiderations, it is plain, that Chriſt was put to death, that he was buried, and that he roſe from the grave, according to his own

predictions.

predictions. And, hence, he was a true prophet; and the christian religion, of course, is of divine original. To invalidate all this evidence, something is necessary, beside ridicule and assertions.

SECTION IX.

The Prophecy of Moses, respecting the Children of Israel.

THAT the prophecies were written, after the events took place, is a noted deistical objection. Should it be granted, or even proved, that this is true of some of the prophecies; yet the prediction of Moses, respecting the past and present state of the Israelites, is not liable to this objection. In the twenty eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, there is recorded a prophetic description of terrible judgments, to be brought on the Israelites, on condition they should forsake the true God. And that these judgments are now executing on them, and have been executing, for about eighteen hundred years, can be denied by no person, who will compare the events with the predictions. Had Moses been a spectator of the calamities brought upon his countrymen, by the Roman armies, when Titus besieged Jerusalem; had he been within the city, and seen the miseries of the people; or had he lived, at any peri-

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od ſince that time, he could not have deſcribed, more truly and preciſely, than he has, many intereſting events of his nation. And, yet, according to the moſt authentic documents, he lived more than three thouſand years ago. And, therefore, he muſt have been divinely inſpired.

The evidence, in favour of religion, ariſing from this prophecy and its accompliſhment, is very powerful. To exhibit this evidence, in a clear light, we ſhall make ſome general remarks upon the more important parts of the prophecy, and ſhew how the events, predicted, have been fulfilled.

Veſpaſian and Adrian, the two great conquerors of the Jews, both marched, with their Roman armies, from Great Britain to the land of Judea, and were ſignal inſtruments, in the divine hand, of puniſhing a wicked people. This circumſtance was foreſhown, in the forty ninth verſe of the prophecy. "The Lord ſhall bring," ſaith the prophet, "a nation againſt thee from far, from the end of the earth, as ſwift as the eagle flieth, a nation, whoſe tongue thou ſhalt not underſtand." As the Roman armies marched from England to the Holy Land, they may be ſaid to have come from *the end of the earth*. As a *ſilver eagle* was the military ſtandard of the Roman armies, ſo an alluſion was had to this circumſtance, in propheſying, that they ſhould come *as ſwift as the eagle flieth*. Between the language of the Jews and the Chaldeans there is a great ſimilarity. But there is no ſimilarity between the languages of the

Jews

Jews and Romans. And, hence, the Romans were *a nation, whoſe tongue* the Jews did *not underſtand.*

The deſtroyers of the Jews were to be "A nation of fierce countenance, which ſhall not regard the perſon of the old, nor ſhew favor to the young." When the Romans entered Gadara, "They ſlew all, man by man," ſaith Joſephus, "ſhewing mercy to no age, out of hatred to the nation, and remembrance of their former injuries." In Gamara the ſame bloody ſcene was acted over. "For nobody eſcaped," ſaith our hiſtorian, "beſides two women; and they eſcaped by concealing themſelves from the rage of the Romans. For they did not ſo much as ſpare young children; but every one, at that time, ſnatching up many, caſt them down from the citadel." The inhumanity and cruelty exerciſed, by the Romans, upon the miſerable inhabitants of Jeruſalem, exceeds all deſcription.

Speaking of theſe calamitous times, Moſes ſaith; "He ſhall beſiege thee, in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou truſtedſt, throughout all thy land." (Ver. 52.) The Romans, it is well known, marched through the land of Judea, laid ſiege to the cities, and took them, one after another, till they made the whole land, like a deſolate wilderneſs.

"In the ſtraitneſs wherewith their enemies ſhould diſtreſs them," (ver. 53.) it was propheſied, that the Jews ſhould ſuffer the greateſt afflictions and diſtreſſes. And, accordingly, during

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the ſiege of Jeruſalem, there were great contentions and tumults in the city ; and a very grievous famine raged, without any control, and reduced the people almoſt to madneſs and deſpair. In their diſtreſs, the neareſt relations and connections ſhowed no compaſſion one to another. " Women," ſaith Joſephus, " ſnatched the food out of the very mouths of their huſbands, and ſons of their fathers ; and, what is moſt miſerable, mothers of their infants." If in any houſe, there appeared any ſemblance of food, a battle enſued, and the deareſt friends and relations fought one with another, ſnatching away the miſerable proviſions of life." And then was literally fulfilled this prediction of the prophet ; " The man's eye ſhall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his boſom, and toward his children, becauſe he hath nothing left him in the ſiege ; and the woman's eye ſhall be evil toward the huſband of her boſom, and toward her ſon, and toward her daughter." (Ver. 54. 56.)

According to Joſephus, many of the Jews killed, dreſſed, and ate their own children, when they were beſieged, by the Roman armies. So great was the ſcarcity of proviſion, ſo diſtreſſing was the famine, in the city, that all the ſocial and parental feelings were baniſhed from its inhabitants. Of killing and eating their own children, the Jewiſh hiſtorian relates ſeveral inſtances. Not only the poorer ſort of people were guilty of this barbarous, unnatural conduct ; but perſons of the firſt quality. And then were eminently ful-

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filled the predictions of Moſes; "And thou ſhalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the fleſh of thy ſons and of thy daughters.—The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure to ſet the ſole of her foot to the ground, for delicateneſs and tenderneſs—ſhe ſhall eat her children, for want of all things, ſecretly, in the ſiege and ſtraitneſs, wherewith thine enemies ſhall diſtreſs thee, in thy gates." (Ver. 53, 56.)

Such havoc and ſlaughter ſhould be made of the Jews, by the Roman armies, that according to the prophecy, *they would be left few in number.* (Ver. 62.) The deſtruction of the human race, brought upon this nation, by Veſpaſian and Titus, almoſt exceeds belief. Joſephus ſays, that, in Jeruſalem and other parts of Judea, they made priſoners of ninety nine thouſand two hundred; and put to death one million two hundred and forty thouſand four hundred and ninety.

To complete their miſery and deſtruction, it was propheſied; "And the Lord ſhall bring thee into Egypt again, with ſhips; and there ye ſhall be ſold, unto your enemies, for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man ſhall buy you." (Ver. 68.) When Titus had taken Jeruſalem, he ſent a great multitude of the captives into Egypt, and there ſold them, in the open market, for ſlaves. Many of them periſhed, on board the veſſels, while ſailing into Egypt; and thouſands of them could not be ſold, for want of purchaſers. So exactly has God, in his providence, fulfilled the prediction!

According

According to the prophecy, *they were to be plucked from off the land, whither they were going to poſſeſs it.* (Ver. 63.) To accompliſh this prediction the whole nation muſt be diſinherited; they muſt be ejected from their houſes, cities, and poſſeſſions. Some time after the Death of Titus, the Jews roſe in rebellion againſt the emperor Adrian; who ſent his armies to Judea, ſubdued the rebels, drove them from the country round about Jeruſalem, and forbade them, on pain of death, to approach nigh to the place, where Jeruſalem once ſtood. Ever ſince this victory and edict, the whole land has been in poſſeſſion of foreigners. A few wandering Jews may be found, in ſome parts of the country; two, in one place; and ten, in another: But they are not ſuffered to be the owners of any ſoil.

Being driven from their own land, the Jews diſperſed themſelves over the face of the earth; and there is ſcarcely any nation, under heaven, where ſome of them do not reſide. They live in North and South America, in the Eaſt and Weſt Indies, among all the nations of Europe, and in many places in Aſia and Africa. This great diſperſion of the Jews was particularly foretold, by the prophet, in theſe words: "And thou ſhalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And the Lord ſhall ſcatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other." (Ver 25. 64.) "And yet for all that," ſaith God, in the prophecy, "when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not caſt them away, neither will I abhor

them

them to deſtroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them." (Ver. 44.) The Jews, wherever they reſide, are a diſtinct people. They ſtill maintain their own cuſtoms, religion, and language. The deſcendants of the ancient nations, the Aſſyrians, Grecians, and Romans, are, at this day, wholly unknown. But the poſterity of Abraham remain as a diſtinct people. Although, wherever they reſide, they are ſubject to the laws of the reſpective nations; yet they do not incorporate themſelves with the people, nor join in marriage, nor copy their manners. To this remark, the Jews, in Spain, are an exception.—The horrid courts of inquiſition, in this kingdom, have obliged them to change, externally, their religion. But, "In vain," ſays Limbroch, "do the great lords of Spain, make alliances, change their names, and take ancient ſcutcheons; they are ſtill known to be of Jewiſh race, and to be Jews themſelves. The convents of monks and nuns are full of them. Moſt of the canons, inquiſitors, and biſhops, proceed from this nation."* The love of money is the cauſe of this diſſimulation. Rather than quit their poſſeſſions, and abandon the proſpects of gain, they are willing to become the greateſt diſſemblers on earth. A like inſtance of diſſembling cannot be found, in any hiſtory. That men ſhould ſecretly retain their own ſentiments of religion, and privately worſhip according to their own rites, and yet externally conform to the eſtabliſhed religion, which is totally

* Limbroch Collat, cum Jud. p. 102.

ly different from their's, and alſo be the miniſters of this eſtabliſhed religion, is a moſt ſurpriſing affair, and would be incredible, were it not known to be true of the Jews, in Spain. But this very impious and monſtrous conduct was predicted by Moſes, in theſe words: "And there thou ſhalt ſerve other gods, which neither thou, nor thy fathers have known." (Ver. 64.) The former Jews were acquainted with the gods and worſhip of the ancient heathen: But they knew nothing of the papal images and ſuperſtition. And, of courſe, the diſſimulation of the Jews, in Spain, is an exact fulfilment of this prophecy.

To repreſent, in a ſtrong light, their amazing ſufferings, during their diſperſion, it was propheſied, that among the nations, whither they ſhould be ſcattered, they *ſhould find no eaſe*, neither ſhould the ſole of their foot *have any reſt*. (Ver. 65.) The hiſtory of the Jews is a hiſtory of oppreſſion, confiſcation of property, and baniſhment from one nation to another. They have been baniſhed from England, and France, and Spain, and Portugal, and Bohemia; and recaled and baniſhed again. Their property, as dear to them as their life, has been ſeized, in many places, and torn from them. With many kings, it has been a practice to lay heavy contributions on the Jews, whenever they wiſhed to collect large ſums of money. By theſe means have been fulfilled the prophetic declarations, that the Jews *ſhould be only oppreſſed and ſpoiled evermore*; that *their ox ſhould be ſlain before their eyes*, and they *ſhould not*

eat thereof; that *the fruit of their land ſhould be eaten up by a nation*, whom they *knew not*; *and* that they *ſhould only be oppreſſed and cruſhed always.*

In many popiſh countries, the children of the Jews have been, violently, taken from their parents, ſhut up in convents and monaſteries, and baptized, and taught principles of religion oppoſite to their own faith. In many places, the children have been retained, when the parents have been baniſhed. At ſuch proceedings humanity muſt ſhudder. We read them with a mixture of pain and pleaſure; with pain, that innocent children have been torn from their parents' embraces, and expoſed to a thouſand ſufferings and indignities among ſtrangers; with pleaſure, that God hath been faithful to fulfil the prophecy of his ſervant Moſes, delivered in theſe words: "Thy ſons and thy daughters ſhall be given unto another people, and thine eyes ſhall look, and fail with longing for them, all the day long; and there ſhall be no might in thine hand. (Ver. 32.)

Of the unhappy Jews it was propheſied, that, "Their plagues ſhould be wonderful and of long continuance." (Ver. 59.) Theſe plagues began to be brought upon this devoted nation, when the Roman armies, under the command of Veſpaſian, firſt invaded the land of Judea. The vials of God's wrath then began to be poured upon a ſinful people. And from that time to the preſent, they have continued pouring, for about eighteen hundred years, without any ceſſation.—

The

The afflictions, it is true, have been greater, at one time than another. But in every period of these eighteen hundred years, the Jews have been hated, and despised, and oppressed, wherever they have dwelt. Although the nations of the earth differ in their customs and religions, yet they have universally agreed to slight, ridicule, injure, and persecute these miserable fugitives.—They have become the astonishment, the proverb, and by word of all nations.

The preservation of the Jews, among all nations, is properly a *standing miracle*: a miracle, against which the Deist can form no rational objection. That one nation should exist, so many hundred years, and suffer so many wars, and sieges, and famines, and pestilences, and massacres, and persecutions, and distresses, and not be exterminated, can be accounted for, only upon the principle, that Divine Providence is, constantly, exerted to put into execution the prophecies, uttered, by his servant Moses. These prophecies were delivered more than three thousand years ago; and God has been executing them, from time to time, during the eighteen hundred years past; and some of them are, now, evidently, carrying into execution. Such accumulated evidence is enough to amaze and to convince all, except the inveterate foes of Christianity; who seem determined to resist all conviction.

SECTION X.

The Prophecy of Chriſt, reſpecting the total Deſtruction of JERUSALEM, *and the Circumſtances of this awful event.*

ACCORDING to the prophecy of Moſes, the cities of Judea were to be deſtroyed, as we have ſeen, and the inhabitants expeled from their native land. As a faithful monitor, Chriſt alſo forewarned the Jews of the dreadful calamities, coming upon their nation, and particularly of the entire overthrow of Jeruſalem. The predictions, which Chriſt uttered, about theſe intereſting events, are recorded, in the twenty third and twenty fourth chapters of his goſpel, according to Matthew. Mark and Luke take notice of the ſame predictions.* As theſe two mention certain particulars, that are not contained in Matthew's account, ſo we ſhall conſider the whole as one connected prophecy, and quote the words of each writer, as occaſion may require.

As a previous remark, we ſhall obſerve, that the war with the Jews, which *left their houſe deſolate*,

* See Mark xiii. 1—20. and Luke xixth, xxiſt, and xxiiid chapters.

late, began, in the twelfth year of the reign of the emperor Nero, in the month of May, and in the ſixty ſixth year of the chriſtian æra; that the temple was burnt, on the tenth day of the month of Auguſt, in the year of Chriſt, 70; that the city was taken, on the eighth day of September, in the ſecond year of the reign of Veſpaſian, in the year 70; that the war againſt the city laſted about forty years: But ſeven years were conſumed, in finally conquering and deſtroying the whole nation.

As a ſign of approaching calamity, Chriſt mentions, that the abomination of deſolation ſhould ſtand in the holy place. He exhorts his friends to take warning, when they ſhould ſee this ſign, and flee from the impending danger. "When you ſhall ſee the abomination of deſolation," ſays he, "ſpoken of by Daniel the prophet, ſtand in the holy place, then let them, who are in Judea, flee into the mountains." (Matt. xxiv. 15, 16.) The abomination of deſolation was, it ſeems, the Roman armies, with their ſtandards; which were ſilver eagles, diſplayed on long ſtaves, at the head of each legion. As the Romans were given to idolatry and ſuperſtition, they uſed to worſhip theſe eagles, as ſo many gods, who led them to victory. And, hence, in ſcripture ſtile, they are called the abomination of deſolation. To idolatry, and every appearance of it, the Jews had, at this time, a very great abhorrence. And, accordingly, "When Vitellus, preſident of Syria, was preparing to go through Judea, with his army,"

my," ſays Joſephus, " ſome of the principal Jews waited on him, and entreated him not to lead his army through their country ; becauſe it was contrary to their laws, that any *images* ſhould be bro't into it ; whereas there was a great many in his army ; meaning the eagles. And he hearkened unto them, altered his intention, and marched his army another way." As the abomination of deſolation was the Roman armies, with their ſilver eagles ; the diſciples might, therefore, well be alarmed, as ſoon as they ſhould ſee theſe armies, with their idolatrous enſigns, appear, in a hoſtile manner, in any part of the land of Iſrael ; but eſpecially might the alarm be great, as they ſhould ſee them drawing nigh to the holy city.

As another prognoſtic of approaching ruin, Chriſt tells his diſciples, that, " There ſhall be famines, and peſtilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." (Matt. xxiv. 7.) It is ſaid, in the Acts (ch. xi. 28.) that, " Agabus ſignified by the ſpirit, that there ſhould be a great dearth, throughout all the world ; which came to paſs, in the days of Claudius Cæſar." Of this famine there is particular mention, in the writings of Joſephus. He ſays, it was very ſevere, and that it happened, in the reign of Claudius Cæſar.—This famine, is, alſo, mentioned by Dion Caſſius, Suetonius, and Tacitus. The firſt and the laſt of theſe authors ſay expreſsly, that it happened, in the reign of Claudius Cæſar.

As to the peſtilences, Joſephus informs, that, about the year of Chriſt 40, there was a great peſtilence,

peſtilence, in Babylon, in which the Jews underwent extreme ſufferings. In the ſixty fifth year of the chriſtian æra, there was a great mortality, at Rome. And, at the ſame time, there were other calamities, in divers parts of the Roman empire. "The gods made this year famous," ſays Tacitus, "by tempeſts and diſeaſes. Campania was laid waſte by a hurricane, which all around overthrew villages, and groves, and fields of grain. In which the violence of the peſtilence deſtroyed every kind of mortal thing; the houſes were filled with dead bodies, and the roads, with funerals; and no ſex, nor age, was free from the danger."

As to the earthquakes mentioned, by Chriſt, we have evidence, from Tacitus, that they happened about the time, Chriſt predicted they would. This hiſtorian ſpeaks of an earthquake, at Rome, in the reign of Claudius, and of another at Apamea. And he ſays, that there was an earthquake, at Laodicea, in the days of Nero. Three cities in Aſia, ſays Euſebius, viz. Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Coloſſe, were overturned, by earthquakes. And Tacitus and Seneca ſay, that, in Campania, there were earthquakes, in the reign of Nero.

According to the teſtimony of heathen authors, it appears, that the prediction of Chriſt, in reſpect to the famines, peſtilences, and earthquakes, was literally accompliſhed. And no one can tax theſe men, with partiality to the chriſtian cauſe,

or

or ſay, that they were combined with prieſts to carry on a religious deception.

As *the beginning of ſorrows*, Chriſt forewarned his diſciples, that *they would hear of wars and rumors of wars.—That nation would riſe againſt nation, and kingdom againſt kingdom.* (Mark xiii. 7, 8.) According to Joſephus, a great commotion exiſted, in Meſopotamia, in which more than fifty thouſand people were put to death.

When Cumanus was governor of Judea, a great diſturbance happened in his government, in the 49th year of Chriſt. In this tumult not leſs than twenty thouſand Jews were ſlain.

Theſe troubles, ſays Joſephus, increaſed with amazing rapidity. In one hour's time, more than twenty thouſand Jews were deſtroyed, in Cæſarea; and the city was emptied of its Jewiſh inhabitants. This deſtruction enraged the whole Jewiſh nation. They flew to arms, divided themſelves into parties, and laid waſte the villages of the Syrians, and their neighbouring cities. Other cities and villages, at a diſtance, were plundered, and an immenſe ſlaughter was made of the people found in them. And the Syrians deſtroyed not a leſs number of the Jews. Every city was divided into parties, armed againſt each other; and the ſafety of the one depended on the deſtruction of the other. The days were ſpent in ſlaughter; and the nights, in terrors; which were ſhocking, beyond all conception. To ſee cities filled with dead bodies, thoſe of old men

mixed

mixed with infants, and ſcattered in all parts, was no uncommon thing.

Contentions were carried to ſuch a height, at Scythopolis, that above thirteen thouſand Jews were killed, in a ſhort time.

After this, ſays our author, other cities roſe up againſt the Jews, who were among them. They of Aſhkelon ſlew two thouſand five hundred; they of Ptolemais, two thouſand. The Tyrians were equally enraged againſt the Jews. At Alexandria, fifty thouſand lay dead, in heaps; nor would the remainder have been ſpared, if they had not petitioned for mercy.

Theſe terrible commotions, fightings, and havoc of the human race, are what Chriſt calls *the beginnings of ſorrows*. Theſe were the wars and rumors of wars, and nation's riſing againſt nation, and kingdom againſt kingdom, of which Chriſt ſpake to his friends. But the end was not yet.—The Romans had not, yet, come againſt Jeruſalem and beſieged it; nor were the people yet ſhut up for univerſal deſtruction. But the end was nigh: even at the door.

In predicting the omens of the great deſolations coming on the Jews, our Redeemer ſays; "There ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe prophets, and ſhall ſhew great ſigns and wonders, inſomuch that, if it were poſſible, they ſhall deceive the very elect." (Matt. xxiv. 24.) According to Joſephus, falſe prophets and falſe Chriſts appeared, in Judea, about the time, that commotions began to riſe, and they carried on their deceptions to

the final overthrow of the nation. Their appearance and deluſions may, juſtly, be conſidered as the fulfilment of Chriſt's prediction.

About the year 46, a certain impoſtor, ſays Joſephus, perſuaded great multitudes, taking their effects with them, to follow him to the river Jordan, aſſuring them, that he was a prophet.

Affairs, ſays he, in Judea, went on continually growing worſe and worſe. The country was again filled with impoſtors and robbers, who had deceived the people. And by means of the crimes committed by theſe robbers, the city was filled with all ſorts of impiety. And impoſtors and deceivers perſuaded the people to follow them into the wilderneſs, where they ſaid, they ſhould ſee manifeſt wonders and ſigns, wrought by the providence of God. About the ſame time, there came a man out of Egypt, who ſaid he was a prophet, and having perſuaded a good number of the people to follow him to mount Olivet, he told them, that from thence they ſhould ſee the walls of Jeruſalem fall down, at his command.

Deceivers and impoſtors, ſays our author, aiming at changes and innovations, made the people mad, and induced the people to follow them into the wilderneſs, pretending, that God would there give them ſigns and wonders.

In relating the prodigies, that foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, the ſame author ſays, that impoſtors ſpake lies, in the name of God, and deceived this unhappy people. They neither attended to, nor believed, the manifeſt ſigns, fore-

ſignifying

ſignifying the coming deſolation. But, like infatuated men, who have neither eyes to ſee, nor minds to perceive, they neglected the divine denunciations of coming wrath.

Of a ſimilar nature we might recite many more accounts. But theſe are ſufficient to authenticate the truth, that Chriſt was fully acquainted with the prodigies, that were to precede the deſtruction of the Jews.

In foretelling theſe diſtreſſing times, our Redeemer ſays; "There ſhall be ſigns in the ſun, and in the moon, and in the ſtars; and upon earth, diſtreſs of nations, with perplexity, the ſea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things, which are coming on the earth: For the powers of heaven ſhall be ſhaken." (Luke xxi. 25, 26.)

That fearful ſigns and omens, reſembling theſe, mentioned by Chriſt, appeared, about this time, is evident from the writings of Tacitus and Joſephus. Tacitus ſays, that, "Prodigies happened, which a nation, expoſed to ſuperſtition, and averſe to religion, had neither power to expiate by victims, nor by prayers. Armies were ſeen to run together through the ſky, arms rattling, and the temple to ſhine with the fire of the clouds.—The gates of the temple were, ſuddenly, thrown open, and a voice, more than human, heard, that the gods were departing; at the ſame time, there was a great movement, as of people departing."

In mentioning theſe fearful ſigns, Joſephus ſays,

that,

that, " There was a ſtar, a comet, reſembling a ſword, which hung over the city, and continued for a year. And before the rebellion, and before the war broke out, when the people were coming together, in great multitudes, to the feaſt of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month of April, at the ninth hour of the night, ſo great a light ſhone round the altar and temple, that it ſeemed to be bright day ; which light continued for half an hour. Moreover, the inner gate of the court of the temple, which was of braſs, and very heavy, and which was not ſhut in the evening, without difficulty, by twenty men, and reſted on a baſis, armed with iron, and was faſtened by bolts, that went deep into the floor, was ſeen to open, of its own accord, at the ſixth hour of the night. And, at the feſtival, which we call the pentecoſt, as the prieſts were going, by night, into the inner court of the temple, they firſt felt a ſhaking, accompanied with a great noiſe, and after that a ſound as of a multitude, ſaying, Let us remove hence."

A few days after that feſtival, there appeared, ſays Joſephus, a wonderful phenomenon, almoſt exceeding belief. And the account of it might ſeem fabulous, if it had not been related, by thoſe, who ſaw it, and if the following events had not been anſwerable to ſuch ſigns. For before ſun ſet, chariots and troops, in armor, were ſeen carried upon the clouds, and ſurrounding cities. But what is ſtill more awful, there was one Jeſus, ſon of Ananus, of low condition, and a country-

man,

man, who, four years before the war began, when the city enjoyed profound peace and flowing prosperity, came up to the festival, in which it is the custom for us all to come to the feast of tabernacles, who on a sudden, began to cry out in the temple; "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the temple, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice against this whole people." This was his cry, as he went about, both by day and night, in all the lanes of the city. And notwithstanding he was apprehended and severely beaten, by the rulers, yet he made no complaint, nor did he cease from uttering his mournful woes.

Thus, according to Tacitus and Josephus, the prophecy, which Christ uttered, about the fearful signs, presaging ruin to the Jews, was fulfilled. The latter historian has recorded them, as affecting signs, warnings, and presages of great calamities, coming upon the Jewish nation.

Many other circumstances, respecting the evils to be brought upon the Jews, were predicted, by Jesus Christ. He foretold, that many would apostatize from his religion; that the gospel of the kingdom would be preached among all nations; that his followers would be brought before kings and governors, and some of them be put to death; and that all the calamities, of which he spake, would happen, before that present generation should have passed away. To prove, by the best testimony, that all these particulars had their ex-

iſtence, before the limited time, would be a very eaſy taſk. But we ſhall wave the ſubject, and paſs on to conſider the prophecy about the ſiege and taking of the city.

In foretelling the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, Chriſt ſays; "There ſhall not be left here one ſtone upon another, that ſhall not be thrown down;" that, "then ſhall be great tribulation ſuch as was not from the beginning of the world, unto this time, no, nor ever ſhall be;" "theſe," ſays he, "be the days of vengeance; and except thoſe days ſhould be ſhortened, there ſhould no fleſh be ſaved; that, "the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another;" that, "Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" and that their houſe ſhould be left unto them deſolate.

That Jeruſalem was taken, and the temple and city deſtroyed by the Roman armies, and that the whole nation ſuffered the moſt affecting and awful calamities, about the time Chriſt had foretold, is apparent, from the writings of men, who lived near thoſe times, and of whom many were eye witneſſes of theſe evils.

To the accompliſhment of Chriſt's prophecy, Tacitus and Dion Caſſius are ſubſtantial witneſſes. They ſpeak of the great calamities brought upon

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the Jews, and of Jeruſalem's having been deſtroyed by Titus, the ſon of Veſpaſian.

Philoſtratus, another author of great credit, ſays, "That when Titus had taken Jeruſalem, and filled all about it with dead bodies and the neighboring nations offered him crowns, he ſaid, he was not worthy of ſuch an honor, nor had he himſelf done that great work. He had only lent his hand to the ſervice of God, when he was pleaſed to ſhew his diſpleaſure."

In his hiſtory of the Jewiſh wars, Joſephus makes particular mention, that the Roman armies came into the land of Judea, and laid waſte villages, towns, and cities, and ſpared neither old, nor young, of any ſex; but ſpread promiſcuous death, wherever they went; that they laid ſiege to Jeruſalem, at length, and overthrew it from its foundations.

When Titus laid ſiege to Jeruſalem, ſays our author, the city was full of inhabitants, by reaſon, that many thouſands had come there, from diſtant parts, to keep the paſſover. The city, at this time, was ſtrongly fortified, full of proviſions and men, and appeared able and ſufficient to have driven the Roman armies from their walls. But they were devoted to deſtruction. The city was full of tumult and diſorders, of robbers and licentious men, of contentions and factions. John, a noted character, headed one faction; and Simon, another. And when they were not fighting the Romans from their walls, they were ſlaying and butchering one another. In their rage

and

and madneſs, they burned many ſtore houſes, full of proviſions, which brought on ſuch a diſtreſſing famine, that they eat old ſhoes, leather, and girdles, carrion, and every filthy thing, that was to be found; and thouſands periſhed for want of food.

The famine, ſays Joſephus, began to be ſevere; and with the famine increaſed alſo the madneſs of the ſeditious. There could no corn appear publicly, any where, but thoſe robbers came running for it. They alſo ſearched private houſes. And if they found any corn, they tormented the people, becauſe they had denied, that they had any. If they found none, they nevertheleſs tormented the people, becauſe they ſuppoſed, that they had concealed it. A meaſure of wheat was ſold for a talent; and the people were driven to ſuch diſtreſs, as to ſearch the common ſewers and old dunghills of cattle, and to eat the dung, which they found there. And many killed, and dreſſed, and ate their own children. With propriety, therefore, might theſe be called *the days of vengeance.*

Through one gate of the city, not leſs than one hundred and fifteen thouſand eight hundred and eighty dead bodies were carried out to be buried. Many were thrown over the walls of the city; and hundreds were put into houſes and caverns of the earth.

The city was, at laſt, taken, and the temple ſet on fire. And whilſt the temple was burning, every thing, that could be found, was plundered;

and

and ten thouſand of the wretched inhabitants were ſlain. Nor was there any regard had to age, or condition. But children and old men, profane perſons and prieſts, were all ſlain, in the ſame manner. The Romans ſet fire to the city, and made the ſtreets run with blood, to ſuch a degree, that the fire of many houſes was quenched with men's blood. The ſoldiers killed, till they were weary of ſlaughter. Thouſands were ſold, with their wives and children, and *were carried away as bondmen, and bondwomen.** And then was fulfilled the prophecy of Chriſt; "And they ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations." (Luke xxi. 24.)

After an end was made of burning the city, and of killing and ſelling the miſerable Jews, Titus gave orders, that they ſhould demoliſh to the foundations, the whole city and the temple. And the whole circumference of the city was ſo thoroughly laid even with the ground, by thoſe, who dug it up to the foundation, that there was nothing left, ſaith Joſephus, to make thoſe, who came hither, believe it had even been inhabited.

And then was fulfilled the prediction of Chriſt; "And they ſhall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee: And they ſhall not leave in thee, one ſtone upon another; becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation." (Luke xix. 44.)

Maimonides, a Jewiſh writer, ſays, that Turnus,

* See Deut. xxvii. 68.

nus, captain of the army of Titus, did, with ploughſhare, tear up the foundation of the temple And then was fulfilled an ancient prophecy " Therefore ſhall Zion, for your ſakes, be plough ed as a field, and Jeruſalem become heaps, and the mountain of the houſe, as the high places o the foreſt." (Mic. iii. 12.)

Is it poſſible to read the hiſtory of the Jewiſh wars, and the total deſtruction of the nation, and compare theſe things, with Chriſt's prophecy of of them, and then deny, that he was a true proph- et ? For ſuch infidelity there is no cure. With men of this deſcription there is no reaſoning. That Chriſt had a clear knowledge of the calami- ties, coming upon the Jews, is evident, from his predictions and their accompliſhment. That he lived and propheſied, before the events took place, is manifeſt, from the moſt authentic hiſtories. And, hence, that he was a true prophet, is a con- ſequence, as fair as can be drawn from any prem- iſes whatever.

SECTION XI.

The Prophecy of Daniel, reſpecting the Riſe and Power of Antichriſt.

IN deſcribing the *fourth beaſt*, or the fourth great monarchy of the world, which we have proved

proved to be the Roman, Daniel ſays, that, "The ten horns, out of this kingdom, are ten kings, that ſhall ariſe; and another ſhall ariſe after them, and he ſhall be divers from the firſt, and ſhall ſubdue three kings. And he ſhall ſpeak great words againſt the Moſt High, and think to change times and laws: And they ſhall be given into his hand, until a time and times, and the dividing of time." (Dan. vii. 24, 25.) Of the ſame power the prophet ſpeaks, in the eighth verſe. "I conſidered the horns," he ſays, "and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the firſt horns pluckt up by the roots: And, behold, in his horns were eyes, like the eyes of a man, and a mouth ſpeaking great things."

The *ten horns* of which Daniel is ſpeaking, in this prophecy, are conſidered, by the beſt judges, to be the ten kingdoms, in which the Roman empire was divided. Biſhop Newton, who was well verſed in the prophecies, has enumerated theſe kingdoms to be, 1. the ſenate and people of Rome. 2. The Greeks in Ravenna. 3. The Lombards in Lombardy. 4. The Huns in Hungary. 5. The Alemanes in Germany. 6. The Franks in France. 7. The Burgundians in Burgundy. 8. The Goths in Spain. 9. The Britons. 10. The Saxons in Britain.

The Biſhop of Rome has been, juſtly, conſidered as the little horn which came up among theſe ten horns, or kingdoms. In the hieroglyphic ſtile of ſcripture, a *horn* is uſed, as the emblem of

temporal

temporal, and not of *eccleſiaſtical* power. And, hence, although the Biſhop of Rome was veſted with great dignity and authority, he was not properly the *little horn*, until he had conferred on him the power and dominion of a temporal prince. By this donation and inveſtiture, *the little horn*, or the pope, *pluckt up three of the firſt horns by the roots*; that is, he became poſſeſſed, *in his own right, principality, and dominion*,* of three of the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire had been divided.

In ſpeaking of this prophecy and its accompliſhment, Sir Iſaac Newton ſays, that, "Kings are put for kingdoms; and, therefore, the little horn is a little kingdom. It was a horn of the fourth beaſt, and rooted up three of his firſt horns. In the eighth century, by rooting up and ſubduing the exarchate of Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards, and the ſenate and dukedom of Rome, he acquired Peter's patrimony out of their dominions; and thereby roſe up as a temporal prince or king, or horn of the fourth beaſt. It was certainly by the victory of the ſee of Rome over the Greek emperor, the king of Lombardy, and the ſenate of Rome, that ſhe acquired Peter's patrimony, and roſe up to her greatneſs."†

Before this, the *exarchate* of *Ravenna*, belonged to the Grecian, or rather Roman emperors, reſiding

* *Ut ſuo detineant jure, principatu, atque ditione*, are the words of the donation.

† Sir Iſaac Newton's Obſervations on Daniel, chap. vii. 74, 75, 76.

reſiding at Conſtantinople ; and it was the capital of their dominions in Italy. To poſſeſs himſelf of this territory, and to withſtand Aiſtulphus, king of the Lombards, the Pope applied for aid to Pepin, king of France, who marched into Italy, fought with the Lombards, and obliged their king to ſurrender to the Pope the *exarchate* of *Ravenna*, and other territories ; and Pepin conferred them on the Pope and his ſucceſſors, as a perpetual dominion. Zachary, the Pope, had acknowledged Pepin, as the rightful ſovereign of France ; and the king, to reward the ſee of Rome, for this kindneſs, put the Pope in full poſſeſſion of this temporal dominion and authority. Being thus made temporal princes, the Popes, after this time, dated all their writings, by the years of their own advancement to St. Peter's chair.

Bordering upon the exarchate of Ravenna, was the kingdom of the Lombards, which refuſed ſubmiſſion to the Popes, and cauſed them much uneaſineſs and vexation. To ſubdue theſe troubleſome neighbours, and gain poſſeſſion of their kingdom, the biſhop of Rome applied to Charles, the great, ſon and ſucceſſor of Pepin, to come with an army into Italy. Wiſhing to be on good terms with his Holineſs, Charles complied with the requeſt, marched with a great army into Italy, conquered the Lombards, and beſtowed a great part of their kingdom on the Pope. Charles, at this time, confirmed to the Pope, the former donations of his father, and alſo made an addition of other territories and cities. This gift of Charles

was made, in the ſeven hundred and ſeventy fourth year of the chriſtian æra ; and that of Pepin, in the ſeven hundred and fifty fifth year.

Before this time, the ſenate and people of Rome had revolted from the eaſtern emperors. And they had ſubmitted themſelves to the Popes, to be guided wholly by their will and pleaſure, in ſpiritual things ; but would not allow them to exerciſe any temporal authority. But a new ſcene unfolded to view, after Charles, the great, had overthrown the kingdom of the Lombards. With his victorious army he marched to Rome, and was received by the Pope, biſhops, abbots, and people, and choſen patrician of the city. To reward the church for this honor, and to ingratiate himſelf into her favor, he gave the Pope leave, to hold, under him, the dutchy of Rome, and its territories. To this the people were obliged to ſubmit. In a few years, however, they rebelled againſt Pope Leo, impriſoned and accuſed him of many crimes. To decide this affair, Charles appointed a council of French and Italian biſhops, in which he preſided, as moderator. But, to the aſtoniſhment of the world, the Pope, without pleading his own cauſe, or making the leaſt defence, was acquitted, all his accuſers were ſlain, or baniſhed, and his Holineſs was declared to be ſuperior to all human authority.

After the death of Charles, the people of Rome roſe, once more, againſt Pope Leo. But Lewis, the king of France, ſon and ſucceſſor of Charles, cruſhed the inſurrection, and confirmed

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the Pope, in his temporal dominions. Soon after this, Leo died, and Paſchal was choſen to fill the papal chair. At his requeſt, Lewis again confirmed to the ſee of Rome the donations of his father and grandfather.

In this manner was laid the foundation for the abſolute authority of the Popes over the Romans. And thus *the little horn pluckt up three of the firſt horns by the roots;* and ſubdued three kings.

In conferring theſe temporal dominions and authority upon the ſee of Rome, Charles, the great, was a principal agent. And, to reward him for his good ſervices, Pope Leo III. cauſed, that he ſhould be choſen and crowned emperor of the Romans; which is the ſame as emperor of Germany: For the German empire is only the Roman empire continued. And thus *the kings of the earth agreed to give their power unto the beaſt, until the words of God ſhall be fulfilled.* (Rev. xvii. 17.)

The former part of Daniel's prophecy, as we have ſeen, has been fulfilled in the Pope, by his poſſeſſing himſelf of the *exarchate* of *Ravenna*, the *kingdom* of the *Lombards*, and the *government* of *Rome*. His power, at firſt, was very ſmall; which was predicted in his being called *the little horn*. But it ſoon gained ſtrength ſufficient to pluck up, by the roots, three of the ten horns. In explaining the prophecy, Daniel ſays, that *he ſhall be* divers from the firſt. As a temporal prince, and exerciſing *temporal juriſdiction*, he was like the other ſeven kings, among whom the Roman empire

was

was divided. But he was *divers* from them, in the *eccleſiaſtical* and *ſpiritual* authority, which he claimed and exerciſed over the conſciences and ſouls of men. To no perſon, but the Pope, can this prophetic deſcription be applied. And to him it may be applied, with ſafety. For he alone has uſurped and exerciſed both a *temporal* and *ſpiritual* authority over men.

The *little horn*, ſays Daniel, *had eyes, and a mouth, that ſpake very great things; whoſe look was more ſtout, than his fellows.* The *eyes* of the *little horn* emblematically repreſented the ſubtilty, cunning, and policy of the biſhops of Rome, to uſurp dominion over men, in things both ſacred and profane. For deep laid ſchemes, and ſagacity and reſolution to execute their ſchemes, they have ſurpaſſed any ſet of men whatever. By their high tone of authority, in decreeing articles of faith, in claiming ſupremacy over all biſhops and kings, in thundering out their bulls from the Vatican, and excommunicating princes and rulers, and abſolving ſubjects from their rightful ſovereigns, and condemning heretics to puniſhment and death, they *have ſpoken very great words;* and in them alone has this part of the prophecy been completed.

No character of men has ever aſſumed ſuch dignity and ſuperiority, as the popes. *Their looks have been more ſtout, than their fellows.* They have worn the *triple crown;* they have appeared with the greateſt parade and ſplendor, at their coronations, and in the ſolemn proceſſions they

have

have made on feſtival days ; they have claimed authority, not only over all biſhops and eccleſiaſtics, in Chriſtendom, but over emperors, kings, princes, and their ſubjects.

By claiming infallibility, as Chriſt's vicegerents on earth, and riſing ſuperior to all laws human and divine ; by ordaining articles of faith and modes of worſhip ; by requiring obedience to their decrees, that were repugnant to reaſon and ſcripture ; and by aſſuming the power of granting indulgences to commit ſin, of pardoning the vileſt wretches, and praying ſouls out of purgatory, the Popes *have ſpoken great words againſt the Moſt High.*

Of the *little horn* it was propheſied, that *he ſhould wear out the ſaints of the Moſt High.* To whom can this be applied, with ſo much propriety, as to thoſe prodigies of cruelty, oppreſſion, and perſecution, who have filled St. Peter's chair, for more than a thouſand years ? How many wars have been declared againſt the true friends of Chriſt ! How much have they ſuffered by perſecutions, impriſonments, maſſacres, and the horrid court of inquiſition ! They have been torn from their connections and families, and dragged to priſons and dungeons, and ſtretched on the rack, or burnt at the ſtake, or made to linger out a miſerable life, under the greateſt diſtreſs and cruelty, becauſe they would not comply with what they deemed, ſuperſtition and idolatry.

To complete the character of the *little horn*, it was propheſied, that *he ſhould think to change times*

and laws. To all, acquainted with the doctrines and impious practices of the church of Rome, of which the pope is the head, it muſt be evident, that this prediction has been accompliſhed in him. By his ſole authority, he has appointed feaſts and faſting days, for which no example, nor precept, can be found, in the word of God. He has introduced new doctrines and new modes of worſhip, and impoſed them on men. He has enjoined the worſhip of images, and praying to departed ſaints. He has invented the doctrine of purgatory, or rather revived the old heathen ſuperſtition of expiating ſins, by ſuffering puniſhment, in the Tartarean regions. And, in various other ways, he has anſwered the deſcription of changing times, and laws, eſpecially in religious concerns.

That *the people of the ſaints of the Moſt High God* might not faint, under theſe diſcouraging predictions, it was revealed to Daniel, that *they ſhould be given into his hand, until a time and times, and the dividing of time.* According to the nature and genius of the prophetic language, a *time* is one year; *times*, two years; and *the dividing of time*, half a year. But a year, in the prophetic ſtile, means as many years as there are days in a year. And, as the Jews reckoned their year to conſiſt of twelve months; and each month to conſiſt of thirty days, ſo a prophetic year is three hundred and ſixty years, computing each day to make a year. And, hence, according to this computation, which is allowed by all to be juſt, *a time, and times, and*

the

the dividing of time, or three prophetic years and a half, make twelve hundred and ſixty common years. So long, and no longer, is the *little horn*, or Antichriſt, to reign, and continue in practiſing his wickedneſs and impiety.

About the duration of the reign of Antichriſt, there is no diſpute, nor difficulty. And could we determine, with the ſame exactitude, the time when he began to reign, we might alſo determine when he would be overthrown and totally deſtroyed. But *here is the faith and the patience of the ſaints*. God has not been pleaſed to reveal unto his people the exact time, when this myſtery of iniquity, this man of ſin, is to be deſtroyed.

SECTION XII.

PAUL'S *Prophecy about the Man of Sin.*

IN Paul's ſecond epiſtle to the Theſſalonians, from the ſecond to the eleventh verſe, we have recorded a very famous prediction of a character, or perſon, about to exiſt, in the church, whom the apoſtle calls *the ſon of perdition*. A queſtion had ariſen, it ſeems, among the profeſſors, at Theſſalonica, about the coming of Chriſt, or his appearing, the ſecond time, to judge the world in the laſt day. This day, it was thought by ſome, was juſt at hand. To rectify this miſtake

was

was a reaſon of writing this *ſecond* epiſtle. In which he undertakes to convince them, that the day of the Lord Jeſus, or his *ſecond appearing* to judgment, was at a great diſtance; that, before this time, a very great and general apoſtaſy would happen, in the chriſtian church, which would be of long continuance, and be productive of moſt terrible evils. And, therefore, he ſays; "Let no man deceive you, by any means: For that day ſhall not come, except there come a falling away firſt, and that man of ſin be revealed, the ſon of perdition; who oppoſeth and exalteth himſelf above all, that is called God, or that is worſhipped; ſo that he as God ſitteth in the temple of God, ſhewing himſelf, that he is God.—And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed, in his time. For the myſtery of iniquity doth already work; only he, who now letteth, will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then ſhall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord ſhall conſume with the ſpirit of his mouth, and ſhall deſtroy with the brightneſs of his coming; even him, whoſe coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs, in them, that periſh."

A candid examination of this prophecy will throw much light upon the *holy ſcriptures*, and afford evidence to believe, that they are, really, given by inſpiration of God.

Before the coming of the day of the Lord, there was to be, according to the prediction, a

great

great and general apoſtaſy from the chriſtian church. The prediction evidently points to the errors, corruptions, and impiety, introduced into the papal church, in faith, worſhip, and practice. Inſtead of worſhipping God, in ſpirit and truth, the biſhops of Rome, and their adherents, have introduced external parade, and a great many inſignificant rites and ceremonies. Neglecting to worſhip God through Jeſus Chriſt, the only Mediator, they have introduced the adoration of ſaints and images. To pray to the Virgin Mary and other departed ſaints, as to interceſſors with God, is both the doctrine and practice of the Papiſts. This is called, by Paul, in another place, *the doctrine of devils*. Inſtead of adhering to the pure and ſimple doctrines of Chriſt and his apoſtles, they have apoſtatized to the imagery and ſuperſtition of old heathen Rome, made ſhipwreck of the faith, and renounced the important truths of Chriſtianity. By the celibacy of their clergy, they have forbidden to marry, and by their lents and other faſting days, they have commanded to abſtain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thankſgiving of them, who believe and know the truth. (1 Tim. iv. 3.) Wherever popery has prevailed, the free uſe of the Bible has been taken from the common people. They have claimed the right of binding the conſciences of men, of preſcribing articles of faith, and requiring implicit obedience to all their decrees. That *ignorance is the mother of devotion* is, with them, a favorite maxim. And, accordingly, they have

uſed

uſed all poſſible means to render the common people ignorant and ſtupid.

Sentiments and practices of this deſcription are evidence of great departure from the faith. And the perſon, or church, who may have impudence enough thus to impoſe on men, thus to tyrannize over their rights and conſciences, may properly be called *the man of ſin, the ſon of perdition.*

To no deſcription of men can the title, *the man of ſin*, be more fitly applied, than to the ſucceſſion of popes, in the church of Rome. Among the popes, there have been ſome of the moſt vile, cruel, and haughty men, whoſe characters have been notorious for diſhoneſty and treachery, cruelty, and fraud, infidelity and debauchery, prodigality, covetouſneſs, ambition, and pride.

Beſide their own perſonal vices, by their indulgences, pardons, and diſpenſations, which they have claimed a power from Chriſt of granting, and which they have ſold in a vile and ſcandalous manner, they have encouraged all kinds of debauchery and wickedneſs. Inſtead of inculcating on men the importance and neceſſity of holineſs, they have countenanced all ſorts of immorality. Many ſchemes have been invented by them to render an holy life needleſs, and to aſſure the moſt abandoned of mankind of ſalvation, without true repentance of heart, and reformation of life, provided they would pay for the indulgence of committing ſin with impunity.

And, accordingly, in this corrupt church, the moſt horrid murders and aſſaſſinations have been

encouraged,

encouraged, and their crimes forgiven, by paying a certain ſum of money. The popes have granted licenſe to commit lewdneſs, intemperance, theft, robbery, and every vice, to which the human heart is inclined. Theſe vile practices make it apparent, that the biſhop of Rome, with his ſucceſſors in the papal chair, is *the man of ſin, the ſon of perdition.*

In deſcribing the character of *the man of ſin*, the apoſtle ſpeaks of him, as one, *who oppoſeth and exalteth himſelf above all that is called God, or that is worſhipped ; ſo that he as God ſitteth in the temple of God, ſhewing himſelf, that he is God.* (Ver. 4.) To any one acquainted with the hiſtory of popery, it is no difficult taſk, to point out *ſtubborn facts*, which will fully anſwer this deſcription. The popes have exalted themſelves above all, that is called God, or that is worſhipped. Neither the true God, nor any of the heathen gods, has aſſumed the titles, which the popes have aſſumed, nor claimed and exerciſed the authority, which they have. To grant indulgence to commit ſin, is a power claimed and exerciſed by the popes alone. By claiming divine titles and power, his Holineſs, with his ſucceſſors, has exalted himſelf, and he has been called a god, who ought not to be called to an account ; the ſupreme deity on earth ; and ſome have riſen ſo high, in their blaſphemy, as to call him *our lord God the pope.* And he has, ever, acted in conformity to this aſſumed power. By abſolving ſubjects from allegiance to their princes, by fomenting and raiſing rebellions in ſtates and

kingdoms,

kingdoms, and by depoſing and murdering kings, and transferring their crowns and kingdoms to uſurpers, the pope has exalted himſelf above all, that is called God. In their pride and haughtineſs, the popes have called emperors their ſubjects. And kings and emperors have been obliged to hold the bridle and ſtirrup, while his Holineſs was mounting his horſe. Others have been commanded to bear up the ſkirts of his robe, when he was making a ſolemn proceſſion, through the ſtreets of Rome. By the approbation of popes, the clergy of the church have abuſed and oppoſed kings, and ſeverely whipped princes. From the head of one king a certain pope kicked off a crown, when he was ſtooping down to ſalute his toes. And to ſhew his abſolute and ſupreme authority, he has ſet his foot upon an emperor's neck. The popes of Rome have claimed the ſole and excluſive right of nominating, crowning, and confirming the kings of Europe. By conducting themſelves in this manner, they have given ſufficient evidence to believe, that they are the very perſons of whom the prophecy was delivered.

In Paul's time, there was an obſtruction to the riſe of Antichriſt. And, therefore, the apoſtle ſays, *And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed, in his time.* (Ver. 6.) That Paul delivered theſe words, in a very prudent and cautious manner, leſt he ſhould offend the Roman emperors, who were then the *ruling powers*, is the general opinion of all proteſtant divines. And from this circumſtance, as well as from other arguments,

guments, it is more than probable, that the Roman emperors were the obſtructing power, to whom the apoſtle refers. All the primitive Chriſtians of note ſuppoſed, that the Roman emperors were the hinderance to the riſe and authority of the man of ſin. And for this reaſon, among many others, they uſed to pray moſt fervently for the continuance of the Roman empire. They believed, that if the Roman empire were overthrown, the man of ſin would ſoon appear and practiſe all his horrid impieties.

To this purpoſe, Tertullian, a noted writer, in the ſecond century, ſays; "Even now the myſtery of iniquity is working; only he, who obſtructeth, will obſtruct, until he be taken out of the way. Who is this but the Roman empire, whoſe diviſion into ſo many kingdoms will bring on Antichriſt? And then ſhall that wicked one be revealed." Momyllus Auguſtulus was the laſt emperor of the weſtern empire. He was depoſed in the year of Chriſt 476, by Odoacer king of the Goths, or Heruli. And then the *let*, or hinderance, to the riſe of the myſtery of iniquity, was taken out of the way.

Having intimated, that the Roman empire was the power, which obſtructed the riſe and prevalence of Antichriſt, and that it would, ſhortly, be removed out of the way, the apoſtle continues his prophecy, and ſays, (ver. 8.) *And then ſhall that wicked be revealed.* On account of his oppreſſions and crimes he calls him, emphatically, *that wicked.* He had before called him *the man of ſin*,

the ſon of perdition. He now riſes a ſtep higher, and calls him *that wicked*, or, as it may be tranſlated, ὁ ἄνομος, *that lawleſs perſon.* With the greateſt fitneſs, this title may be applied to the pope, who has been declared, by his adherents, "to be ſubject to no law: But that he can, by the plenitude of his power, make right, wrong; and wrong, right; virtue, vice; and vice, virtue: that he can diſpenſe with all laws, human and divine; and that he may do all things above law, without law, and againſt law."

Under the authority and protection of the pope, the greateſt crimes have been committed. By his encouragement and influence, provinces, ſtates, and kingdoms, have been overthrown. By his direction, kings, princes, and millions of the human race, have been put to death, in the moſt cruel and barbarous manner. The wars againſt the Saracens, called the holy wars, the deſtruction of the Chriſtians, in the valleys of Piedmont, the maſſacres of the Proteſtants in France, the Netherlands, in England, and Ireland, and the thouſands, who have fallen victims to the inquiſition, are evidence, that the pope is *that lawleſs perſon.*

"The coming of *that lawleſs perſon*, the apoſtle tells us, is after the working of Satan, with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs, in them that periſh. (Ver. 9, 10.) By their monſtrous ſtories, and by pretending to work miracles, the biſhops of Rome, and their long train of prieſts, have

confirmed

confirmed the truth of this prophecy as applicable to themſelves. They have aſſerted, that churches have been taken up, in one place, and carried, through the air, into diſtant countries. They have ſaid, that their images have ſpoken, nodded, ſmiled, and frowned, on certain occaſions. The ſtories which they tell of the miracles wrought, by their preachers, are ridiculous and abſurd, and they ought to ſink into oblivion, were it not for the ſake of illuſtrating the fact, that this prophecy is applicable to them, and has been accompliſhed, in their lying wonders. And for this purpoſe ſolely we ſhall mention a few of their incredible and lying ſtories. They tell us, that the firſt convert St. Gaul made, in Switzerland, was a bear; that St. Anthony of Padua preached to a vaſt aſſembly of fiſhes, which he had miraculouſly called together, to hear him preach the word of the Lord; that St. Francis preached, with great ſucceſs, to birds and beaſts, which he thought our Lord had commanded, when he ordered his apoſtles to go and preach the goſpel to every creature.

Their invention of purgatory, and the methods uſed to make the common people believe in this fiction, are witneſſes to the truth, that Paul had them particularly in view. To ſupport this fiction, they have pretended, that dead perſons have appeared to them, and entreated them, by prayers and tears, to pray their ſouls out of purgatory. And, accordingly, with the moſt ſolemn mockery, prayers have been put up, to the

Virgin

Virgin Mary and other ſaints, for the releaſe of ſouls, in the ſtate of puniſhment. And they have pretended, that their prayers have been anſwerer, and the ſouls releaſed. Nay, to prove this doctrine, they have pretended to voices from heaven and hell, to cures at the tombs of ſaints, or by the bones of deceaſed perſons, to which they have aſcribed the power of releaſing ſinners from purgatory. All the ſtories, and arts, and lying wonders, that could be invented, they have invented, to make the common people believe this doctrine. They have repreſented as martyrs, men and women, who never had an exiſtence. They have enrolled, among the number of their ſaints, the moſt flagitious and abandoned men. They have patroniſed and ſanctified murders, aſſaſſinations, maſſacres, treaſons, and rebellions. And they have promiſed the actors of theſe horrid deeds, that they ſhould not paſs through the fire of purgatory, but have an immediate entrance into heaven, even if they ſhould be killed in the commiſſion of ſuch atrocious crimes.

They have pretended to the power of the keys, or of binding and looſing. They have claimed full power to pardon and abſolve, to cenſure and condemn, to open, at their pleaſure, the gates of heaven, and to ſhut them againſt thoſe whom they wiſhed to exclude from happineſs in the other world. And they have repreſented God, as bound to conduct according to their determinations. In conſequence of this uſurped power, they have pretended to pardon ſome of the greateſt villains,

who

who ever lived, and to condemn to endleſs miſery the moſt innocent and virtuous men. And, yet, infidels will ſay, that Paul was not the ſubject of divine inſpiration. That our apoſtle lived ſeveral hundred years before the deſtruction of the old, heathen, Roman empire, and the riſe of Antichriſt, is a fact well ſupported by hiſtory. And as he predicted the riſe of *the man of ſin*, or Antichriſt, his haughtineſs, blaſphemy, errors, ſuperſtition, and lying wonders, it is a plain conſequence, that he was a true prophet of the New Teſtament.

CHAPTER IV.

Strictures on Deiſtical Writings.

THE name, *Deiſt*, has been uſually aſſigned to one, who denies the Divine authority of the holy Scriptures. An infidel is a word of wider extent. To the denial of divine inſpiration, it unites the denial of a God.

In the following pages, the words *Deiſt*, *infidel*, and *enemy* of revealed religion, will be uſed, to ſignify the ſame character.

Deiſtical writers have, by the appearance of ar-

gument, attempted to prove the Sacred Scriptures a fabulous production, the invention of men, not inſpired of God.

The following ſtrictures are made upon *deiſtical writings*, with a view, to aid the reader, in judging of the force of *deiſtical aſſertions*.

Deiſts, in general, open their attack upon Chriſtianity, by ridicule. This is their mighty engine: And it is the moſt powerful, and, perhaps, the moſt ſucceſsful weapon, they uſe, in their attempt to deſtroy the Bible. All perſons can laugh, but all cannot reaſon. This mode of attacking Chriſtianity, is deſigned to anſwer purpoſes, which can be effected in no other way. For ridicule is unanſwerable. Who can refute a ſneer? It is independent of proof, reaſon, or argument; and may be uſed as well againſt eſtabliſhed facts, or even demonſtration, as againſt falſehood. The uſe of banter and ſneer is taking a ſtation, quite beyond the reach of argument and reaſon. It is a weapon, which may be as advantageouſly employed, againſt true religion as falſe.

Ridicule is no argument. It is rather proof of the want of argument, and the weakneſs of a cauſe.

No man wiſhes to be indebted to ridicule, in ſupport of a cauſe, who has it in his power, to command ſolid arguments: Conſequently, ridiculing the holy Scriptures, is a ſubſtitute, in the room of fair argument, for no other reaſon, but becauſe fair argument cannot be collected to ſupport infidelity. Nothing is ſtronger proof of determidate

terminate refuſal, to ſubmit to the evidence of Chriſtianity, than the method of treating it, with levity, ridicule, and vulgar witticiſms.

The ſubject of Chriſtianity *demands*, that its cauſe be tried upon its own merits. Chriſtianity *demands*, that no attack be made againſt it, by any other weapons, than thoſe of ſober, and fair argument. *Chriſtianity demands*, that its truth or falſehood, never employ the pen of ridicule, or become a theme for the exerciſe of wit.

In oppoſing Chriſtianity, Deiſts have aſſembled all the follies, that have cleved to the faith and practice of religious profeſſors, and repreſented them, as ſo many doctrines of revealed religion.

This is an unfair and diſingenuous repreſentation. The iniquitous practices of men do not originate from the doctrines of revealed religion; but from the human heart. No man has any juſt right, to charge the wickedneſs of men to the pure doctrines of Divine Revelation. No man may infer, Chriſtianity is falſe, becauſe men are vicious.

Deiſts often inſinuate, that Chriſtianity is a fable, ſupported by intereſted prieſtcraft.

This is certainly a popular argument, againſt the truth of Divine Revelation; and with many would be taken for a juſt and concluſive one. But what is the amount of this inſinuation, but a bold unwarranted aſſertion? An aſſertion without proof, and without even the poſſibility of proof? What connection is there, between prieſtcraft, and the truth of divine inſpiration? Admit the exiſt-

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ence of prieſtcraft, and what then ? Is the concluſion juſt, that the holy ſcriptures are not the inſpiration of God ? This would be ſaying, Becauſe there is prieſtcraft in the world, there is no revealed religion ; which is as juſt reaſoning, as to ſay, Becauſe there are knaves, there are no honeſt men.

A conſiderable objection, Deiſts have raiſed againſt Chriſtianity, is founded upon the equal confidence, with which the chriſtian, mahometan, and pagan doctrines are received.

It has been urged, that Mahometans are as confident their religion is true, as the Chriſtian is, that his religion is true ; and the Pagan is no leſs confident in his ſuperſtitions, than the believer in the Bible is, that the Bible was given by inſpiration of God.

The enemies of divine revelation ſay, Mahometans believe in the prophet of Arabia ; Pagans believe in the ſuperſtitious ceremonies of their country ; and Chriſtians believe in the religion of the Bible ; and each of them receive their ſeveral religious tenets, with equal, and undoubting confidence.

Deiſts may ſay all this, whether the chriſtian religion is true, or falſe, and it is an argument, which goes, as forcibly, to prove it true, as falſe : For it proves nothing.

To conclude, no religion is true, becauſe many religions are falſe, is an unjuſtifiable concluſion ; a concluſion, which will not bear application. To exhibit this argument, in full force, let it be

obſerved,

obſerved, *Deiſts* believe Chriſtianity is a fable ; Mahometans believe in the Koran ; and Pagans believe in the worſhip of the ſun ; therefore, there is no truth in the creed of the *Deiſt*, Mahometan or Pagan.

Deiſts, in making oppoſition to revealed religion, are driven into frequent inconſiſtencies.

In general, they reject the doctrine of miracles, becauſe the facts ſaid to be miraculouſly performed, do not agree with common experience. They believe nothing, unleſs the reported fact agrees with our own obſervation, upon the ſubject. According to this poſition, no fact can be rendered credible, unleſs it has taken place, within our knowledge : Conſequently, the exiſtence of froſt and ſnow can never be rendered credible to men, who live in regions, in which froſt and ſnow have had no exiſtence.

Some *bolder*, and more *inconſiderate Deiſts*, have aſſerted, that whole tribes of Indians have ſprung up from the earth, in the manner, inſects and other worms are generated. Aſſertions, of this kind, are doubtleſs made, with intentions, to deſtroy the Moſaic account, concerning the origin of the human race. But no human teſtimony has ever appeared, to aſcertain this fact ; and had it been atteſted, by numerous, reſpectable witneſſes, it could not be made credible, according to deiſtical aſſertions. For we have never ſeen any inſtance of the like nature. It contradicts all our experience. Into ſuch abſurdities and inconſiſtencies, Deiſts lead themſelves, in oppoſing revealed religion ;

gion ; a plain evidence, their path is crooked, and is directed by wild conjecture.

An inconſiſtency, running throughout infidelity, is, acting in oppoſition to Chriſtianity, with a confidence, which nothing but proof and demonſtration, can juſtify. Infidels diſcover a bold, profane and daring ſpirit. They fear not to ſpeak of ſacred things with indecent freedom. They are decided in their declarations. They even employ conſiderable zeal, in venting their hatred againſt the Bible ; in diſſeminating deiſtical ſentiments ; in preſſing upon men their objections to revealed religion ; and in attempts, to impreſs the ignorant with apprehenſions unfavourable to the holy ſcriptures. *Zeal !* it may be aſked, for what ? For the removal of all moral obligations. *Zeal !* for removing all the guards of virtuous practice. *Zeal !* for opening all the flood gates of iniquity. *Zeal !* for placing men back, in the ſhades of heatheniſm.

The inconſiſtency of this *confident zeal* is ſeen, more fully, by comparing it, with what, in general, is deemed human prudence, in other matters. Conſidering the claim the Bible makes to divine inſpiration, the nature and magnitude of the ſubject, about which it treats, and the unavoidable ruinous conſequences of rejecting it, in caſe it proves true ; the confirmed diſuſe of it, and fixed habit of treating it as a book of lies, require certain, poſitive evidence, of its forgery and falſehood. But where, it may be demanded, is this plenary evidence ? Who is in poſſeſſion of it ?

What

What champion, among ancient, or modern infidels, has been able to ſubſtantiate the fact, that the holy Bible is a fable? For no man can prove it, to be inconſiſtent with the Divine Perfections, to make the revelation contained in the holy Scriptures. There is nothing in the works of creation, inconſiſtent with God's giving men ſuch a revelation. The likeneſs, between the conſtitution of nature, and the revelation contained in the Bible, juſtifies the concluſion, that the Author of nature, is the author of the holy Scriptures.

As the poſſibility of God's giving men a revelation cannot be denied; ſo neither can any man prove, God has not done it. It is impoſſible, to make it appear, God has not inſpired men, in the manner the holy Scriptures teach us, God has made communications to men. The chriſtian records tell us: "All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God." "That holy men of God ſpake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt."

No man has it in his power to prove, the Bible is not a true, conſiſtent book, deſerving the name of divine inſpiration. The principal facts, written in the Sacred Scriptures, cannot be proved falſe. They are better atteſted than thoſe of any ancient hiſtory now extant. All the perſons, and places, kingdoms and nations, doings and works, recorded, in the Sacred Writings, had exiſtence, in the manner and time, they are repreſented. Who is able to make out the proof, that the hiſtory of the Bible is not genuine and authentic?

Further,

Further, it is not poſſible to prove, that all th uſual objections, againſt the Bible, cannot be re conciled with truth. Deiſts have objected to th truth of Divine Revelation, on account of wha they are pleaſed to call, inelegancy of ſtyle. Th force of this objection is loſt, when it is conſider ed, the inſpiration of a book, is not to be deter mined by its ſtyle, but by its fitneſs, to anſwer th end, for which it was intended. The Bible make no pretenſions of teaching men neatneſs and ele gancy of ſtyle. It profeſſes to inſtruct men, i the great concerns of morality and piety : And i its language was accommodated to the genius o the nation, to which it was originally communicat ed, it anſwered the purpoſes of its deſign.

Language has varied and improved. Men o diſcernment do not condemn the manner of an cient writing, becauſe it does not correſpond t the manner of writing, now in uſe.

In juſtice to the ſtyle of the Bible, it muſt b obſerved, that many paſſages in it, are written i language truly beautiful and ſublime.

The obſcurity of ſome parts of the Bible, i made an objection, againſt its divine authority Whether there is any weight in this objection muſt be determined, from conſiderations reſpect ing the language of the Bible, and the nature o the ſubject, upon which it treats. In writings ſo ancient, as thoſe of the Bible are confeſſed to be ſome obſcurity muſt be expected. The Bible was originally written, in languages, long ſince dead But had it have been written, in our own lan-

guage,

guage, and in our own time, ſome obſcurity might have been expected. The ſubjects treated upon juſtify this expectation. Some of them are ſublime, ſome of them are incomprehenſible, and ſome of them are prophetic.

In favor of the inſpired writings, it is obſerved, this obſcurity generally lies in what is circumſtantial ; and not ſo much in that, which is really eſſential.

Deiſts are pleaſed to conſider the trivial nature of ſome parts of the holy Scriptures, as a real objection to their divine authority. They ſay, there is too much exactneſs paid, to ſmall, trifling things ; while others, more important, and neceſſary to be known, are omitted.

This objection vaniſhes, when it is conſidered, the recording of that, which is now deemed minute and trifling, might be uſeful to them, for whom it was immediately deſigned.

A conſiderable objection, Deiſts urge againſt the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, is, the imperfect publication of revealed religion. Some of them have ſaid, that if Chriſtianity had been the religion of all nations, they ſhould not have heſitated, about receiving it, as a revelation from God ; but ſince it is not neceſſary for all men, they ſay, it is not neceſſary for any man.

The ſufficiency of human reaſon, is the leading ſentiment in Deiſm. This is the main ground, on which Deiſts proceed, in rejecting revealed religion. Reaſon, exalted into the place of revelation, is the occaſion of innumerable errors, in

them, who receive the Bible, as the inſpiration of God. Reaſon, the ſole guide of Deiſts, conducts them, into the region of infidelity.

Objections againſt revealed religion, on account of its want of univerſality, are made, upon the ground of God's being under obligation, to give all men, equally, the means of preſent, and future happineſs. This notion contradicts all our experience, upon this ſubject. It admits a doubt, whether any two individuals, of the human race, have been placed, in exactly the ſame ſituation, in regard to the means of happineſs.

" In all the diſpenſations of Providence, with which we are acquainted, benefits are diſtributed in a ſimilar manner ; health and ſtrength, ſenſe and ſcience, wealth and power, are all beſtowed on individuals and communities, in different degrees and at different times."*

The communication of revealed religion to ſome, and not to others, agrees with experience, reaſon, and the light of nature. Moreover, it is an inquiry, deſerving the attention of the ſerious, how far the want of univerſality, in revealed religion, is owing to the fault of men.

Quitting, for the preſent, deiſtical objections : It may be added, that the whole ſtructure of Deiſm is built, upon ſtrong improbabilities, when contraſted with the direct, poſitive evidence of Chriſtianity, both internal and external. But, what merits the particular conſideration of all ſober men, is the doctrine of Deiſts makes Moſes and the prophets, Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, a

ſet

* Jenyns

ſet of impoſtors, impious deceivers. If what they ſay be true, Jeſus Chriſt was the greateſt impoſtor, who ever viſited the world. He claimed the character of a prophet, ſent from God, to reveal to men, future inviſible realities: And he appealed to his works and miracles, in ſupport of his Divine Miſſion. If he was a real impoſtor, as Deiſts ſay, he was a great one. But how an impoſtor, the moſt extraordinary of any who has appeared, ſhould maintain ſuch a character, as Chriſt maintained, is unaccountable, upon any principle ever yet diſcovered in human nature. Like all other impoſtors, Chriſt, had he been one, muſt have been governed by ambition. Inſtead, therefore, of oppoſing the ſinful prejudices of the jewiſh nation, he would have ſeized the favorable opportunity, of profiting by them. He would have flattered the vices, and applauded the ſeeming virtues, of that people. But the conduct of Chriſt was the reverſe of all this. He openly reproved the firſt characters among the jewiſh nobility, and uniformly taught them duties directly oppoſite to pride and vain glory. The author before quoted, ſaith: "If any one can believe that theſe men could become impoſtors, for no other purpoſe than the propagation of truth, villains, for no end, but to teach honeſty, and martyrs, without the leaſt proſpect of honor or advantage, &c. &c. &c. he muſt be poſſeſſed of much more faith than is neceſſary to make him a Chriſtian, and remain an unbeliever from mere credulity."

With

With this conſideration is connected, the uſual method of Deiſts, in undermining revealed religion. They oppoſe looſe, unconnected objections, to the whole weight of evidence, in ſupport of Chriſtianity. The proof of the chriſtian religion conſiſts in a long ſeries of things, cloſely connected, and reaching from the beginning of time to the preſent day. Deiſts have the vanity and the audacity, to ſelect ſome unconnected ſtory, ſuch as Samſon's foxes, or Jonah's whale, as they ſneeringly call them, and dreſs theſe facts, in the moſt ridiculous light, and then exhibit them, as full proof of the forgery of the Bible.

This mode of attacking revealed religion, is calculated to miſlead and deceive thoſe, who are unaccuſtomed to arrange the evidences of Chriſtianity. It is taking the advantage of the ignorant and unſkilful.

The marked and decided hatred, which Deiſts ſhew towards revealed religion, betrays a conſciouſneſs, that they view the contents of the Bible to be againſt them. Their uniform method is, to neglect the examination of evidence, in ſupport of divine inſpiration. Their main work conſiſts, in collecting objections, and uſing them, to ſink the credit of Chriſtianity. They hide the evidence in favor of divine truth, and act with deciſion, without allowing themſelves a previous examination of the ſubject. They appear to be reduced to the dreadful alternative, of deſtroying the Bible, in order to live upon its ruins. The manner of their treating the ſubject, is proof, their

objections,

objections, to revealed religion, are not the result of close investigation, or the sober dictates of the understanding, but the malevolence of the heart.

Deism is inconsistent with human prudence. It advances against revealed religion, with a confidence, justified by nothing short of positive proof, that the holy Scriptures are not the inspiration of God.

It is well known, many Deists are fond of disturbing serious company with their absurdities. It must occur to every thinking mind, that the blaspheming infidel, has no security, against the event of being convicted, when too late, of all the truths of revealed religion. To rest an eternal interest upon the unsupported confidence of Deists, amounts to presumption. No man, acting rationally, would willingly hazard so much, without the most convincing evidence, that the issue of his conduct, will be favorable. Nothing, then, but real delusion, animates the zealous infidel, in attacking Christianity, with a virulence unequalled.

Infidels cannot possibly act upon safer ground than doubt; when, therefore, they admit their doubts, upon this subject, to occupy the place of positive proof, they reduce themselves to a level, with the wildest enthusiasts. It is true, enthusiasm, and infidelity, are wide extremes; yet they both unite, in committing their particular subjects to the guidance of their passions; they unite, in treating, with neglect, light and evidence, in the department of religion. Fiery ungovernable zeal stimulates the enthusiast: Zeal, charged with bit-

terneſs and rancorous diſaffection to revealed religion, ſpurs on the infidel.

A book, called the Age of Reaſon, written by Thomas Paine, will next come under conſideration. In this performance is found nothing new, as to objections againſt Chriſtianity. He takes the ground, long occupied by infidels. In the manner of his writing, there is a kind of novelty. In raſhneſs, inconſiſtency, miſrepreſentation, ridicule, and falſe reaſoning, few men, perhaps, on any ſubject, have ever ſurpaſſed him.

Some of his inconſiſtencies will firſt be named. Mr. Paine ſpeaks reſpectfully of Jeſus Chriſt, and reprobates revealed religion, as the origin of all human miſery. His words are : "The morality that he preached and practiſed was of the moſt benevolent kind. He preached moſt excellent morality." Again he ſays : "The moſt deteſtable wickedneſs, the moſt horrid cruelties, and the greateſt miſeries, that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called revelation or revealed religion."

Is not this a contradiction ? How can moſt excellent morality, be charged with being the origin, of the greateſt miſeries ? It would have been as conſiſtent, to have ſaid : The ſun ſpreads light, life and joy, through the world and is the real ſource of all the miſeries of man.

Apart from inconſiſtency, he makes this heavy charge againſt revealed religion, in direct oppoſition to the teachings of the holy Scriptures. He confounds the corruptions of men, with the pure

doctrines

doctrines of godlineſs. His charge, againſt Chriſtianity, is an unfounded, diſingenuous accuſation.

He tells us: "The word of God cannot exiſt in any written or human language;" and in the ſame work he allows it poſſible for the Almighty to make a communication immediately to men.—This is ſaying, God can reveal truth to men; but ſuch a revelation cannot exiſt among men, which, in effect, is ſaying nothing. It is ſaying and unſaying.

The reaſon he aſſigns for the impoſſibility of the word of God having exiſtence among men, is, the progreſſive change of words, and the want of univerſal language. And, for the ſame cauſes, his Age of Reaſon cannot exiſt, among men, in any written or human language.

In ſome parts of his book, he has exhibited Deiſm, as the only religion of man. And did he expect that committing his deiſtical ſentiments to writing, would give them exiſtence among men, in written or human language? And cannot God have his communications to men committed to writing, in human language, as well as he, his infidelity? Has he the advantage of the Almighty, in placing his infidelity in human or written language? He wrote his book, with intention to put the world in poſſeſſion of his deiſtical notions; and he expected they would have an extenſive exiſtence among men: And yet God cannot do ſo much, becauſe, there is no univerſal language.—What an inconſiſtency!

This

This author, in treating upon miracles, ſays: "We cannot judge of miracles, becauſe we do not know the whole extent of the laws of nature." This is found in the firſt part of his work. In the concluſion of the ſecond part, he tells us: "The creation is the Bible of the Deiſt. Deiſm then teaches us without the poſſibility of being deceived, all that is neceſſary or proper to be known." But if we are unacquainted with the laws of nature, in their extent, how are we ſecured from deception? Creation is a plain intelligible book; but we are ignorant of its extent; and if ignorant of it, why are we not liable to be deceived by it?

In ſinking the credit of miracles, he tells us: "The exhibition of a miracle implies a lameneſs or weakneſs in the doctrine that is preached."—And is not the book of creation ſubjected to the ſame difficulty?

According to his doctrine, God exhibits moral truth, through the medium of creation. And do the works of God, in creation, imply leſs weakneſs, in the doctrine, it teaches, than a miracle does?

Mr. Paine, confident that the ſtructure of the univerſe contains all uſeful knowledge, conſiders God as ſpeaking to men, in his works, and ſaying: "Learn from my munificence to all, to be kind to each other." His doctrine is, God invites men, by the works placed before them, to imitate him. Imitate him! in what? In his munificence. And does the language of creation hold forth no

other

other inſtance of divine conduct, for the imitation of man ? God, in ſome caſes, communicates ſparingly : And may not man imitate God in this example ? God ſometimes withholds his favors : May not man imitate him, by ſhutting up his bowels of compaſſion ? God, in ſome caſes, by means of the eſtabliſhed laws of creation, inſtantaneouſly, takes away the life of men : And may not a man imitate God, in inſtances of this kind, and by them think himſelf juſtified, in giving his neighbor the fatal ſtab ?

This author determines, the Bible is not the word of God, becauſe, in it, is the account of the Iſraelites' deſtroying the Canaanites, by the expreſs command of God. This he calls aſſaſſination. And he ſays, this command is contrary to all our belief in the moral juſtice of God. He aſks, Wherein could crying ſmiling infants offend ? He ſpurns the book, which contains ſuch accounts.

He profeſſes himſelf a Deiſt, and pretends to obtain his notions of the moral juſtice of God from his works. Creation is his book. Crying ſmiling infants are deſtroyed by fire, by earthquakes, by famine, and by many other calamities. The evil is the ſame, to the ſuffering infants, whether they are deſtroyed by the expreſs command of God, or by any of the forementioned means. Why, then, does he not ſpurn, as ſpurious, his book of creation, in which theſe facts are written ?

The Canaanites were accuſtomed to ſacrifice crying

crying ſmiling infants to their hateful idol, Moloch Their iniquity was full. It can never be proved inconſiſtent with the moral juſtice of God, to give it, in expreſs command, to have them extirpated.

Mr. Paine concludes, Moſes was not the author of the books, aſcribed to him, becauſe, in one of them, it is ſaid, Moſes was very meek, above all the men, which were on the face of the earth. This verſe gives him great offence, and on account of it, he ſays : " If Moſes was not the author, the books are without authority ; and if he was the author, the author is without credit, becauſe, to boaſt of meekneſs is the reverſe of meekneſs, and is a lie in ſentiment." The reader may ſee the whole force of this argument, in the following application of it, to Mr. Paine's own writings.

In the firſt part of the Age of Reaſon, it is ſaid : " The book of Luke gained admittance among the canonical books, by one vote only."— In his ſecond part, he tells us, he never inſerted this. What reaſon have we, to believe, Thomas Paine was the author of the Age of Reaſon ? Some part of it, he ſays, was not written by him. If Moſes is ſet aſide, becauſe ſome hand might make the addition of this verſe, to his books ; by the ſame rule, his book is ſet aſide, becauſe of ſimilar additions. Now, if he was not the author of the Age of Reaſon, the book is without authority, and if he was the author of it, the author is without credit ; becauſe, to boaſt, as he

does,

does, of not having perſecuted any man, in the American, or French revolution, is the reverſe of the quality boaſted of, and is a lie in ſentiment.

He admits the books of Ezra and Nehemiah to be genuine : But he does not admit them to be the word of God. What, genuine books, and not the word of God ! And yet, in the beginning of Ezra, we are informed, the propheſy of Jeremiah was fulfilled. And in each of thoſe books reference is had, to the books of Moſes, and other books of the Old Teſtament, as true, authentic records.

He admits, alſo, the writings of Ezekiel, and Daniel, to be genuine ; which admiſſion deſtroys his whole performance, in his Age of Reaſon.— For if Daniel is genuiue and authentic, Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed. Another inconſiſtency in his book, deſerving notice, is, that in the firſt part of his work, he ſays, the book of Proverbs is an inſtructive table of ethics ; and in his ſecond part, he calls it a jeſt book. How an inſtructive table of ethics, is a jeſt book, no man can tell, but he, who knows how to reconcile contradictions.

The reader will now pleaſe to take into conſideration, the falſehoods, miſrepreſentations, and erroneous reaſonings, copiouſly diſſeminated, in Mr. Paine's book. It may be, previouſly, obſerved, that reaſoning is concerned with two, or more, propoſitions. Laying down two or three poſitions, and comparing them together, and deducing undeniable conſequences, from them, is called reaſoning. There is ſuch a thing as drawing

ing a juſt inference, from a falſe poſition : This is called ſophiſtry, or deceitful argumentation.— Whether this latter mode of reaſoning is not applicable to the greater part of Mr. Paine's Age of Reaſon, the reader will judge for himſelf.

In his preface to his ſecond part he pleads the rectitude of his infidelity, from his experience of the conſcientious trial of his own principles.— Such appeals prove nothing, in the preſent caſe. Thouſands of martyrs, in firm belief of the Goſpel, have experienced the conſcientious trial of their faith. Theſe witneſſes will ſtand in proof of revealed religion. The evidence of the truth of Divine Revelation, derived from the ſufferings of the martyrs, goes as far to ſupport the truth of Chriſtianity, as the experience of infidels can go, in ſupport of infidelity. The conſcientious trial of one's principles, is no proof of the rectitude of one's opinion. The robber, who has been accuſtomed to look upon property, as lawful plunder, may experience the conſcientious trial of his tenets, as well as any man.

Mr. Paine aſſerts : "There is no affirmative evidence, that Moſes is the author of the books aſcribed to him ; and that he is the author, is altogether an unfounded opinion, got abroad nobody knows how." He attempts to prove the Bible is not the word of God, from the books of the Bible. Yet he ſaith, there is no affirmative evidence, Moſes is the author of the books, which bear his name. Admit affirmative evidence to be the teſtimony of men, and the Bible itſelf

makes

makes his aſſertion a falſehood. The nation of the Jews have affirmed, and do affirm, to this day, that Moſes is the author of the books aſcribed to him. This author, no doubt, would admit Jeſus Chriſt as affirmative evidence; for he calls him a modeſt man. Chriſt told the Jews; Moſes wrote of him. Did not Moſes give you the law?

Another argument he uſes, to prove Moſes was not the author of the five books aſcribed to him, is, becauſe Moſes is ſpoken of in the third perſon, and this, he ſays, is the ſtyle of another man, ſpeaking of Moſes. It is always, he ſays, "The Lord ſaid unto Moſes, or Moſes ſaid unto the Lord." This argument againſt the authorſhip of Moſes, is, that Moſes ſpeaks of himſelf in the third perſon. This, he calls the language of another man, ſpeaking of Moſes.

In the works of Joſephus, in the Commentaries of Cæſar, and in other ancient and modern writings, the ſame manner of writing is adopted. When Joſephus ſpeaks of himſelf, it is, Joſephus, who ſaid or did this and that. When Cæſar ſpeaks of himſelf, it is, Cæſar, who made a ſpeech, it is, Cæſar, who invaded Britain, &c.— But no man queſtions the genuineneſs of theſe books. What weight, then, is there in his argument againſt the authorſhip of Moſes; when the ſame manner of writing, in other authors, is not the ſmalleſt objection againſt them? Give Moſes the grammatical right, which other men claim, and his objection, to the authorſhip of Moſes, is

childiſh nonſenſe. In a late publication, under the ſignature of the French Miniſter, the third perſon is uſed, throughout the communication.—Shall not poſterity, on our author's argument, conclude, that the underſigned of this communication, was not the author of it ?

Mr. Paine exerts himſelf, to make people believe, Moſes was not the author of Geneſis, becauſe the word Dan is found in Geneſis ; and in the book of Judges, it appears Dan had not a name, till 331 years after the death of Moſes.—This is a curious argument, calculated to miſlead and deceive the ignorant. The fallacy of this reaſoning reſts upon his taking for granted, that the Dan in Geneſis, and the Dan in Judges, is the ſame place. *Abram purſued them unto Dan.* And what hindered his purſuing them further ? A city, or a river ? A river will ſtop an army as well as a city. And here it is proper to obſerve, Jordan was formed by the junction of two rivers, called Jor and Dan. And the probability is, the Dan, mentioned in Geneſis, is the river Dan ; and not the city once called Laiſh. Admit this to be the truth, and Mr. Paine's long illuſtration ſinks to nothing : His argument ſpends its whole force, without reaching the point. Moſes, as an author, remains unhurt.

It is ſuggeſted to the curious, as a problem, whether the geographical deſcription of the holy land, admits the Dan, in Geneſis, and the Dan, in Judges, to be the ſame city. From the ſituation of places, in that country, there exiſts not a

doubt,

doubt, the Dan mentioned, in Geneſis, will be placed to the eaſtward of Sodom; and the Dan, mentioned in Judges, was certainly to the weſtward of Jeruſalem, which was weſt of Sodom.

Truth ventures into the light. Truth is not afraid of the reſult of cloſe inveſtigation. Mr. Paine ſpeaks in commendation of ſcience, and his modeſty frequently allows him to ſpeak of it, as if he poſſeſſed no ſmall ſhare of it himſelf. Prieſts he repreſents, as an ignorant ſet of men, the ſum of whoſe knowledge, is *a*, *b*, *ab*, and *hic*, *hæc*, *hoc*. If his account of them be true, they will be incompetent to the ſolution of the propoſed problem. Let it, then, be ſubmitted to ſome learned man, not attached to the prieſthood. But his concluſion, againſt the authorſhip of Moſes, is not admitted, even upon the ſuppoſition, the Dan, in the beforementioned books, meant the ſame place. For ſome tranſcriber might give it the name, in Geneſis, though it was not known by that name before.

To imbitter the minds of the people, Mr. Paine places Moſes among the moſt deteſtable villains, and paints his conduct in all the odious colors, which diſgrace humanity. He charges him with iſſuing orders, to butcher boys, to maſſacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters; and to complete the horrid ſcene of his repreſentation he ſays: "The number of women children conſigned to debauchery by order of Moſes, was thirty two thouſand." In his account of the conduct of Moſes, this man has intermingled falſehood with

miſrepreſentation.

misrepresentation. Falsehood, in asserting Moses assassinated boys, women and children, by his own authority alone. This assertion is the thing to be proved. Had he proved, that Moses carried on his wars against the Canaanites, without any command from God, he would have proved Moses a villain: But this proof cannot be made, till the proof is made out, that Moses was not commissioned of God, to extirpate that people.—Falsehood, in saying that women children were consigned to debauchery, by the order of Moses. There is no proof of this, in the Bible, or in any other book. Slavery, and not debauchery, was the lot of captives, in ancient times. It was then the custom of the Israelites, and other nations, to make slaves of their captives. All he says, about the cruelty of Moses, is built upon these instances of falsehood and misrepresentation; consequently, his charge against Moses is abuse and slander.

He places the iron bedstead of the king of Bashan, among his proofs, that Deuteronomy is a fabulous book, not written by Moses, nor till four hundred years after his death. He has calculated the length of the king's bed, to great exactness; and on account of its length, he considers the book of Deuteronomy a fable. But, to have proved his assertion, he should have accompanied it with the proof, that the bed was really too long for the monarch; and that a royal bed was, in no instance, of a larger size than a common one; and that Og did not command his men, as Alexander did,

did, to enlarge their bedſteads, in order to give people, in after time, an idea of the extraordinary ſtature of his countrymen.

The bedſtead of Og was ſaid to be in Rabbath of Ammon; which Rabbath, Mr. Paine ſays, was not taken, till four hundred years after Moſes' time. And this Rabbath did not belong to the dominions of Baſhan, and Moſes could know nothing about Rabbath, nor of what was in it. In order to ſupport his fable, he muſt have proved the fact, that Rabbath was not a city of Baſhan; and that it was impoſſible, that the king's bed could be in that city, after the king was ſlain; and that it was impoſſible for Moſes to have evidence of a fact exiſting, in a city, which he had never ſeen.

For, if there is not the leaſt evidence to prove, Rabbath did not belong to Baſhan; that the bed of the king might not remain, when the king was dead; and that Moſes was unable to ſubſtantiate a fact, without being an eye witneſs of it; the teſtimony of Moſes muſt be admitted, and Thomas Paine's account of the matter be called, ſomething worſe than fable, unfounded aſſertion, unſupported repreſentation. His telling us, what he knows nothing about, diveſts him of all title to credit.

In deſtroying the authority of the book of Joſhua, he uſes the expreſſion, "*unto this day*," as proof, that the book was written long after Joſhua's time. Several other ſimilar expreſſions, he conſiders, as proof, the facts were recorded, a long

time after the authors are ſaid to have lived.—His argument againſt the book of Joſhua is founded upon the lapſe of centuries, implied, in the expreſſion, unto this day. He contends for length of time, in order to make the proof the book was written, long after Joſhua's death. But he has no authority from the uſe of the term, in queſtion, to make it an argument of the ſmalleſt weight. Moſes, in his laſt years, uſed a like expreſſion to mark an event, which happened within the memory of them, who were then living: "The Lord hath deſtroyed them, unto this day." According to the account given in the Bible, Joſhua lived twenty four years, after the deſolation of Ai: And it was conſiſtent for him, in the latter part of his life, to ſay, Ai is in ruin unto this day. His argument againſt the book of Joſhua, is but a mere quibble.

Mr. Paine makes himſelf merry, with the tale of the ſun ſtanding ſtill upon Gibeon, and the moon in Ajalon. "This, he ſays, is a fable which detects itſelf. Such a circumſtance could not have happened, without being known all over the whole world. One half would have wondered, why the ſun did not riſe, and the other why it did not ſet, and the tradition of it, would have been univerſal." According to his ſtory, this fable detects itſelf, becauſe no people, in the world, know any thing about it. But there is ſufficient reaſon, why they ſhould be ignorant of it; for no nation has any records, which reach this period, by ſeveral hundred years. But the nation, whoſe

hiſtory

hiſtory carries us the furtheſt back, gives ſome intimations, of the event. The Egyptians, whoſe records approach the neareſt to this time, have a confuſed account, that the ſun had four times deviated from his courſe. Mr. Paine aſſerts, the book of Joſhua is anonymous, and conſequently without authority. This is a falſe concluſion, even admitting the book of Joſhua is anonymous. It is a concluſion, calculated to deceive the ignorant. Anonymous records are often admitted as authentic. A nameleſs book may contain truth, or falſehood. Thomas Paine's Age of Reaſon would have contained juſt as much truth, and juſt as much falſehood in it, had it been anonymous.

This author profeſſes to be a great enemy to cruelty ; but he injures the character of Ruth.— He calls her a ſtrolling country girl of infamous character. This charge againſt Ruth is falſe.— She was not a country girl. She had been married for ten years. She became a widow, and implored protection from an aged kinſman.

Mr. Paine wiſhes to make people believe, the books of Kings are books of lies, becauſe ſeveral things are mentioned in them, which are not mentioned in Chronicles. The aſcent of Elijah, the children, who mocked Eliſha, the reſurrection of a dead man, are recorded in Kings, but not in Chronicles ; and becauſe they are not found in Chronicles, he concludes, the books of Kings are books of lies.

Conſider, then, the force of this argument ; and will it not be evident, that any one would be

ridiculed,

ridiculed, who ſhould reaſon, in the ſame manner, on any other ſubject ? The books of Chronicles have ever been reckoned, a ſupplement, or abridgment, of Kings : And who can expect, in ſuch kind of records, to find all the ſame facts related over again ? It is granted, the books of Kings and Chronicles were hiſtories of the ſame time. What then ? Is the ſilence of one author, concerning certain facts, abſolute proof of lies, in another author, who records them ? In General Waſhington's official letters, ſo called, are related facts, which no hiſtorian has recorded. What then ? What ! we muſt conſider all things mentioned in Waſhington's letters to be lies. According to this author's reaſoning, we muſt make the concluſion, that certain facts, in the General's letters, are falſe ; becauſe every hiſtorian, who has written a hiſtory of the time, when they are ſaid to have happened, is ſilent about them.— Will every American ſubmit to this mode of reaſoning ? No better argument than this, is employed againſt the books of Kings.

To ſink the prophets into contempt, this author lets us know, by an exact ſtatement, that all the prophets, except three, lived during the period, included in the books of Kings and Chronicles, and that but two of them are mentioned in theſe books. The whole force of this argument reſts upon the ſilence of the books of Kings and Chronicles, concerning the names of the prophets.— He ſays : " The Bible hiſtorians have treated theſe men, with degrading ſilence." The concluſion

ſion he draws, from this circumſtance, is, "that the prophets were not men of ſuch importance as prieſts and commentators have ſince repreſented them to be." And muſt every man be ranked among liars and raſcals, whoſe name happens not to be mentioned by the hiſtorian of his time? Mr. Paine informs us, in his book, that he reſided, in America, during the late revolution; and, at a certain time, wrote a book, called Common Senſe; an anonymous work, and, conſequently, without authority, according to his doctrine. But whoever reads Ramſay's, or Gordon's hiſtory, will find Mr. Paine's name but ſparingly mentioned, in theſe authors. And yet their hiſtories include the time, of his reſiding in America. The concluſion, then, from the ſilence of theſe men, is, that Mr. Paine is not a man of much importance.—His argument againſt the prophets, will ſink *him*, to the ſame inſignificant rank, which he aſſigns to them.

In a note, this author has a witticiſm, upon the ſtory of an angel's appearing to Joſhua, with a drawn ſword in his hand. Had he known the deſign of this appearance, he would have ſeen, that his wit was miſplaced. His ridicule, about pulling off the ſhoe, muſt have originated from ignorance of ancient cuſtoms. Pulling off the ſhoe was a token of reverence for the Divine Preſence; and the cuſtom of going barefoot, into religious buildings, continues, in ſome countries, to the preſent time.

This author deſtroys the authority of Ezra and Nehemiah,

Nehemiah, on account of an error, in the enrolment they make, of the numbers returned from Babylon, and to make it eaſy for the weakeſt man to become an infidel, he places the ſeveral numbers, in full view, and adds them together; and, by an exact calculation, makes it appear, the ſum total does not agree with the particulars. Can it be ſuppoſed, that Ezra was ſo ignorant of the loweſt branch of ſcience, as not to be able to add together ſixty particulars? What if there was a miſtake in numbers? The Jews reckoned by letters, and it was eaſy to miſtake one letter for another. Miſtakes about numbers cannot be certain evidence of falſehood. This author ſays, he ſpake reſpectfully of the book of Job, in the former part of his work, and did it ignorantly. If his miſtake, in this inſtance, be allowed the weight, he gives it againſt the books in queſtion, it will deſtroy his whole performance.

This author aſſerts, with reſpect to the character repreſented in Job, under the name Satan, that this is the firſt and only time, this name is mentioned in the Bible. This aſſertion is falſe. Satan, meaning an enemy, is found, in many places, in the Bible, both before, and after the book of Job. "And Satan ſtood up againſt Iſrael."—Chron. xxi. 1.—"And let Satan ſtand at his right hand." Pſ. cix. 6.

This author boldly tells us, the Jews never prayed, but when they were in trouble; and never prayed for any thing, but victory, vengeance and riches. This is a falſehood, and is made from

ignorance,

ignorance, or from deſign ; if from deſign, it appears he meant to make lying and falſehood ſupply the place of argument. Biſhop Watſon, in anſwer to this aſſertion, ſays : " Read Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, and bluſh for your aſſertion,—illiberal and uncharitable in the extreme."

Mr. Paine adds ânother falſehood, in ſaying, the heathen did not worſhip images more than we do. This man has undertaken to prove the Bible falſe, from the Bible itſelf ; and he has promiſed not to go out of the Bible for proof of its forgery. He tells us : " The heathen did not worſhip images." Aſtoniſhing ! One is divided, whether to conſider the effrontery, or the ignorance of the man, to be the greateſt. What ! did not the heathen worſhip images ? What ! did not Nebuchadnezzar command the princes, the governors, and captains, and rulers of the provinces, to worſhip the image of gold ? The town clerk of Epheſus teſtifies againſt this author's aſſertions.—" What man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Epheſians is a worſhipper of the great goddeſs Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter ?" The worſhip of images, among the heathen, was univerſal.

Mr. Paine calls the book of Pſalms a ſong book. Let any ſober man read the Pſalms, and judge, whether there is any thing, in them, bearing the leaſt reſemblance to the pureſt ſongs of human compoſition. In piety, in purity of morals, and in elevated diction, as well as rational

divinity,

divinity, the Pſalms far ſurpaſs the moſt celebrated ſongs of the moſt diſtinguiſhed poets.

The book of Proverbs gets the name of a jeſt book in this man's work ; and the books of Eccleſiaſtes and Solomon's Song, he makes a ſubject of ridicule. This, doubtleſs, was the eaſieſt way he had to paſs them, in his advance through the Bible. The reader will judge, whether there is any jeſting in the firſt Proverb, in the book of Proverbs, or any thing deſerving ridicule in the laſt verſe of Eccleſiaſtes. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge ; but fools deſpiſe wiſdom and inſtruction." "Let us hear the concluſion of the whole matter : Fear God and keep his commandments : For this is the whole duty of man. For God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." A man, who can make himſelf witty, upon words of this import, can convert ſolemnity into mirth.

Mr. Paine has abuſed the prophet Iſaiah, and given a miſrepreſentation to ſome of the moſt important parts of his prophecy. He calls Iſaiah a lying prophet, and an impoſtor, and the book, that bears his name, a book of falſehoods. He tells us, the prophecy of Iſaiah, which reſpects Cyrus, was written one hundred and fifty years after the death of Iſaiah : "That the forty fourth and the beginning of the forty fifth chapters of Iſaiah, are a compliment to Cyrus, who permitted the Jews to return to Jeruſalem from the Babylonian captivity." Here mark the invention of the man. To deſtroy the prophecy of Iſaiah,

concerning

concerning Cyrus, he conſiders this very prophecy a hiſtory, written after the event. But falſehood is not always conſiſtent. It was a ſingular compliment he makes the captive Jew pay Cyrus, by telling him, his religion was, but ſuperſtition. The Perſian prince, doubtleſs, adhered to the religion of his country, which ſuppoſed two oppoſite principles, under the emblem of light and darkneſs. This author makes the captive Jew ſpeak, in the name of God, ſaying, I form the light, and create darkneſs,—I the Lord do all theſe things. I am the Lord and there is none elſe.

Mr. Paine was not ſufficiently attentive to his repreſentation of the burden of Babylon, to place the writers of the prophecy, at a proper diſtance, ſo as to meet the events. Babylon was deſtroyed, according to the prediction of Iſaiah, but it was not deſtroyed in Cyrus's time, nor till long after his death. This city was in a ſtate of proſperity, when Alexander marched his army into the caſt; nor was it ſwept with the beſom of deſtruction for a long time after this period.

This author calls Iſaiah a lying prophet, for delivering the following prophecy: "Behold, a virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon." This ſame prophecy proved, Iſaiah was not an Impoſtor, but a true prophet.

He goes on to tell us: Iſaiah proved a falſe prophet in his meſſage to Ahaz. The king of Syria, and the king of Iſrael, at a certain time, were combined againſt Ahaz, and this author ſays, Iſaiah told Ahaz, theſe two kings ſhould not ſucceed

againſt him ; but inſtead of the event's anſwering to his prediction, they ſucceeded. "Ahaz, he ſays, was defeated and deſtroyed, an hundred and twenty thouſand of his people were ſlaughtered, Jeruſalem was plundered, and two hundred thouſand women, and ſons and daughters, carried into captivity." This is a miſrepreſentation of facts. Iſaiah's meſſage to Ahaz is contained, in the ſeventh chapter of his prophecy, and it is ſimply this: "The counſel of the two kings ſhall not ſtand." And what was this counſel ? It was to dethrone Ahaz, and place the ſon of Tabeal on his throne. This counſel did not ſtand. Ahaz *was not* deſtroyed, and the two hundred thouſand women, &c. *were not* carried into captivity. The two kings *did fail* in their attempt to deſtroy the houſe of David. They *did not* deſtroy it.—Events took place according to Iſaiah's prophecy. He proved a true prophet.

In audacity, in boldly aſſerting abſolute falſehoods, in miſrepreſenting facts, in profaneneſs of reaſoning, and in villainous treatment of characters, Mr. Paine, perhaps, was never outdone by human kind. After having miſrepreſented the character of Jeremiah, he boldly charges him, with lying and falſe prediction. He miſrepreſents his character, in calling him a traitor to his country, for propheſying againſt the wiſhes of the princes of Judah. Jeremiah was impriſoned for delivering this prophecy, and there is the teſtimony of one of the king's attendants, which is proof of his being abuſed by the princes. Ebedmelech ſaid

unto

unto the king : " My lord, the king, theſe men have done evil, in all that they have done to Jeremiah, the prophet." This is no inconſiderable proof of the honeſty and integrity of Jeremiah.

The charge of lying is made, againſt this prophet, on account of his evading the queſtions of the princes, in conference with them. He, on this occaſion, told them part of the truth, and kept back that part, which they had no right to know. It can never be proved, there was any violation of obligation in this inſtance. It is not lying, or duplicity, to withhold truth, from men, not entitled to the truth in queſtion. He charges Jeremiah with falſe prediction, on account of his predicting the fate of Zedekiah. This prediction is found in Jeremiah, xxxiv. 2, 3, 4, 5. " Thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he ſhall burn it with fire : And thou ſhalt not eſcape out of his hand, but ſhalt ſurely be taken and delivered into his hand : And thine eyes ſhall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he ſhall ſpeak with thee, mouth to mouth, and thou ſhalt go to Babylon. Thou ſhalt not die by the ſword :—Thou ſhalt die in peace."

This is the prediction, he calls falſe : But every part of it was exactly fulfilled. The city *was* taken, and delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he burnt it. Zedekiah did *not* eſcape ; but was taken. Zedekiah ſaw the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon gave judgment againſt him, and put out his eyes. Zedekiah *was*

carried

carried to Babylon. Zedekiah *did not* die by the ſword. He died in peace. Jeremiah's prediction, in this inſtance, was true. The hiſtory records the facts to have taken place, as the prophet had foretold. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. Jer. lii. This author's charge, againſt the prophet, is falſe. His whole ſtatement of the account is á miſrepreſentation.

When this author comes, to treat upon the New Teſtament, he tells us, the chriſtian faith is built, upon the heathen mythology. This is a mere groundleſs aſſertion : It is only a conjecture, contrived to ſupport a favorite tenet, the forgery of the Bible. In undermining the New Teſtament, he lays down two incontrovertible poſitions, as he calls them. The firſt is, " That the agreement of all the parts of a ſtory, does not prove that ſtory to be true." The ſecond is, " That the diſagreement of the parts of a ſtory proves the whole cannot be true." Theſe connected poſitions, are to be his mighty engine, to beat down the whole fabric of Chriſtianity. Here let the reader mark his fallacious reaſoning, upon this ſubject, and the abſurd concluſion he means to make from his premiſes. Every thinking man knows, theſe poſitions will not bear to be applied to credible teſtimony. Suppoſe, four men of good character agree in teſtimony, concerning a fact ; who will refuſe to admit their teſtimony ? Three, or five, credible witneſſes, being ſpectators to a certain tranſaction, are not able, uſually, to relate it, in the ſame order, or to mention all the circumſtances of it. They

may

may all agree, as to the principal fact; but, ſome of them omit one circumſtance, belonging to it, and ſome of them omit another. As to circumſtances, they diſagree; in the principal fact, they unite. Does their diſagreement, in circumſtantial things, weaken their teſtimony, in favor of the fact itſelf? Certainly it does not. The author tells us, Matthew and Luke diſagree, in giving the genealogy of Chriſt. Matthew's genealogy is in the firſt chapter of Matthew; and Luke's in the third chapter of Luke. He ſays: "Did theſe two men agree, it would not prove their genealogy to be true, but as they contradict each other, in every particular, it proves falſehood abſolutely. If Matthew ſpeaks truth, Luke ſpeaks falſehood; and if Luke ſpeaks truth, Matthew ſpeaks falſehood." But what if Matthew ſpeaks truth, and Luke ſpeaks truth, though it be not the ſame truth? What then? Are their accounts forgeries? The concluſion does not follow. They are ſaid to contradict each other in every particular. How? In giving the ſame genealogy? No: Matthew gives one, and Luke another. Matthew records the genealogy of Joſeph, and Luke records the genealogy of Mary. And the preſumption is, they both took their reſpective genealogies from authentic records. For, had they impoſed a falſe account upon the Jewiſh nation, they would have been immediately detected.

To give the reader full proof, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are mere forgeries, this author makes the following arithmetical calculation:

" From the birth of David, to the birth of Chriſt, is upwards of one thouſand and eighty years ; and as there were but twenty ſeven full generations, to find the average age of each perſon, mentioned in the liſt, at the time his firſt ſon was born, it is only neceſſary to divide one thouſand and eighty by twenty ſeven, which gives forty years for each perſon. As the life time of man was then but of the ſame extent, it is now, it is an abſurdity to ſuppoſe that twenty ſeven following generations ſhould all be old batchelors before they married. So far from this genealogy being a ſolemn truth, it is not a reaſonable lie." Here is the appearance of mathematical accurary. Shall the argument and the concluſion be admitted ? They both ſtand or fall together.

It will be remembered, that Ezra and Nehemiah were ſet aſide, by this author, becauſe they were charged with a miſtake in calculation. If the doctrine of erroneous calculation had weight againſt their books, let it have its application to this man's Age of Reaſon. In his argumentation, two miſtakes are viſible, each of which alone deſtroys the whole force of his reaſoning, againſt the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. The one is, that in Matthew's genealogy three generations are omitted ; Azariah, Joaſh and Amaziah. Let theſe be added to the twenty ſeven, and they make thirty, and then the average age, at the time of the firſt born ſon, will be thirty ſeven. The other error is, he has, ignorantly or deſignedly, taken it for granted, the firſt born ſon always ſucceeded his father.

father. This was not true. Solomon ſucceeded David on the throne of Iſrael ; but Solomon was not the firſt born ſon of David. He certainly had ſeveral brethren, who were grown to manhood, before he was born. Abijah ſucceeded Rehoboam ; but Rehoboam had three ſons, before Abijah was born. The calculation and concluſion he makes is demonſtrably falſe : Falſe, on account of omiſſions ; falſe, becauſe the firſt born are aſſumed for ſucceſſion ; falſe upon his own principles. Is this the man, who detects the forgery and falſehood of the Bible ? Neceſſitated to make ſuppoſitions, contrary to facts, in order to ſink the authority of the Bible. If ignorance lead him to ſuch groſs errors, he is certainly unfit to teach men, upon the ſubject of religion ; if deſign, he is leſs deſerving of credit ; if either of them, he is to be ſuſpected in all his aſſertions.

This author tells us : " The New Teſtament being founded upon the prophecies of the Old, muſt follow the fate of its foundation." He has the confidence to ſuppoſe, he has removed the prophecies ; and, hence, fondly concludes, he has deſtroyed the New Teſtament. But his concluſion does not follow. Admit the prophecies were deſtroyed : (Though, it is not in his power to deſtroy them.) Admit the prophecies were proved forgeries ; this proof would not deſtroy the authority of the New Teſtament. The New Teſtament is connected with the prophecies of the Old ; but the New Teſtament is not wholly founded upon the prophecies of the Old. Independent of

prophecy,

prophecy, the New Teſtament is accompanied with evidence of its truth. Miracles, and its internal character, are convincing proofs, to a Gentile, totally unacquainted with the prophecies.

He allows the probability of the exiſtence of ſuch a perſon as Jeſus Chriſt; but conſiders his exiſtence, or nonexiſtence, a matter of total indifference. "It is the fable of Jeſus Chriſt, as told, in the New Teſtament, and the wild and viſionary doctrine raiſed thereon, againſt which he contends."

What! Is the real exiſtence of a man, working miracles, and preaching in the cities of Judea, a fable? This way of reckoning will convert every fact into a fable.

He ſays: "The miraculous conception of Jeſus Chriſt, is a fable, blaſphemouſly obſcene." How obſcenity can be predicated, of the operations of an infinite incorporeal Spirit, is beyond the power of man to tell. He might, as well, have applied obſcenity to God's creative power. "For he ſpake, and it was done, he commanded and it ſtood faſt." Men, who have imbibed the poiſon of this author, have been emboldened by him, to utter blaſphemous expreſſions, concerning the conception of Chriſt. It deſerves to be conſidered, what right men have, to affix ſuch ideas to the agency of the Divine Spirit.

Mr. Paine, when treating upon the books of the New Teſtament, ſays: "There is no direct proof for, or againſt their genuineneſs. The ſtate of the caſe is doubtfulneſs, and doubtfulneſs is the oppo-

ſite

ſite of belief." Doubtfulneſs is not the oppoſite of belief : Doubt always ſuppoſes ſome belief, ſome evidence ; otherwiſe, all doubt would be removed. His placing the genuineneſs of the New Teſtament, in a ſtate of doubtfulneſs, is admitting ſome proof, in favor of thoſe books.

He furniſhes us with an inſtance of contradiction, between Matthew and Luke, in the angel announcing the immaculate conception. Matthew, he ſays, relates : "The angel appeared to Joſeph ; and Luke ſaith, it was to Mary." This is no contradiction. For the angel appeared, both to Joſeph and Mary. To Mary firſt, and to Joſeph, ſome months afterwards. In this caſe, Matthew ſpeaks truth, and Luke ſpeaks truth ; but they ſpeak of different appearances.

He conſiders the ſtory of Herod's deſtroying all the children, under two years old, to be a lie ; becauſe it is mentioned by Matthew only. The ſilence of one, or more writers, does not prove the falſehood of another. There might be reaſons, why Matthew ſhould record this fact, and the other evangeliſts omit it. Matthew wrote to Jews ; and they were jewiſh children, whom Herod killed. The fact was well known to that nation ; and Matthew's recording it is rather proof of its truth. For if Herod had never maſſacred thoſe chrildren, every Jew would have objected to the account of it, as given in Matthew's Goſpel. This man has told us : "Matthew makes Jeſus eſcape the ſlaughter, by being conveyed to Egypt ; but John was under two years old, and he ſtayed

behind,

behind, and yet John fared as well as Jeſus, who eſcaped." This makes out the lie. It is enough to deſtroy one's patience to follow this man's fallacious mode of argumentation. He cannot prove John was under two years of age, at the time, Herod ordered the maſſacre of the children. John was ſix months older than Jeſus; and might be beyond the age of two years; but if he was not, his eſcaping with his life is no proof, Herod did not deſtroy all the children he could find, of the age, included in his edict. John might not be within Herod's juriſdiction at the time, the children were ſlain.

Mr. Paine tells us, in his preface to his ſecond part, that when Robeſpierre decreed the death of certain characters, the name of Thomas Paine was on the liſt; but Thomas Paine eſcaped the maſſacre of Robeſpierre. Shall the future hiſtorian conclude, the maſſacre of Robeſpierre was a *lie*, becauſe Thomas Paine was not guilotined?

This author ſays: "That not any two of the evangeliſts agree, in reciting, in exactly the ſame words, the written inſcription, placed upon the croſs."

Matthew ſtates the inſcription, *This is Jeſus the king of the Jews.* Mark reads it, *The king of the Jews.* Luke, *This is the king of the Jews.* John, *Jeſus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.* Here, it is obſerved, all the evangeliſts agree in the main and eſſential parts of the inſcription. The king of the Jews is found in each one of them. As the inſcription was written in Hebrew, Greek and

Latin,

Latin, it cannot be proved, it was written, in each language, in exactly the ſame words.

This author ſays : " The only one of the apoſtles, who was preſent, at the crucifixion, was Peter ; and Peter's teſtimony is nothing, becauſe he was convicted of perjury." This ſtatement is not true. It is not certain Peter was preſent, at the crucifixion. John was certainly preſent, on the ſpot ; becauſe Jeſus, while on the croſs, committed to John the care of his aged mother. The reaſon, why Peter's teſtimony is admitted, is, becauſe he repented of his denial of Chriſt, and ſuffered martyrdom, on account of his faith.

Mr. Paine exerts himſelf, to deſtroy the evangeliſts, becauſe the circumſtances attending the crucifixion, are differently related, in the four books. He ſaith, Matthew tells us, There was darkneſs over all the land, from the ſixth hour unto the ninth. That the veil of the temple was rent in twain. That there was an earthquake. That the rocks rent. That the graves were opened, and the bodies of many of the ſaints, that ſlept, aroſe. The other evangeliſts, he ſays, do not mention theſe facts : From hence he concludes, Matthew's account is a lie. This, in part, is a miſrepreſentation. Mark and Luke *do* record two of the miracles, mentioned by Matthew, the darkneſs, and the rending of the veil ; and their ſilence, reſpecting the others, is no proof, they were ignorant of them, or believed them not. Neither is their ſilence diſagreement with Matthew. The ſilence of John, upon the miracles attending the

crucifixion, is eaſily accounted for, on the principle of his Goſpel being a ſupplement to the other Goſpels. He records few of the miracles recorded by the other evangeliſts, and relates many things not related by them.

This author amuſes himſelf with Matthew's account of the reſurrection of the ſaints; and appears to be diſpleaſed with him for not being more particular upon the ſubject. But, who can admit the ſuppoſition, that Matthew gave a falſe account of the reſurrection of the ſaints? The admiſſion of its falſehood, would have effectually deſtroyed the credit of his hiſtory. This fact was well known, in caſe it was true; and upon the ſuppoſition it was not true, every Jew would have been able, to have contradicted him. Why then was not his teſtimony proved falſe, in its firſt appearance? The Jews were inimical to the Goſpel, at that time, and have continued ſo, to the preſent day. They would have gladly availed themſelves of any falſehood, in matter of fact.

This author makes the writers of the New Teſtament diſagree, in their account of Chriſt's reſurrection; and their diſagreement, he ſays, "is proof, they were not preſent, and conſequently knew nothing of it." "Matthew, he ſays, ſtates, that at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the firſt day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. Mark ſays it was ſunriſing. John ſaith it was dark. Luke ſays, it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James, and other women, that

came

came to the ſepulchre. And John ſtates, that Mary Magdalene came alone." Where is the diſagreement of the writers? They all agree, as to the day the women went to the ſepulchre. They all agree, as to the time of day, the women went to the ſepulchre. It was early in the morning. Neither is there any diſagreement of the writers, reſpecting the women, who went to the ſepulchre. John ſtates that Mary Magdalene went, but he does not ſay, ſhe went alone; ſhe might be accompanied with the other women, whom Luke mentions. Mr. Paine calls Mary Magdalene a common woman. This is ſaid, without proof, and his aſſertion is nothing leſs, than deſigned ſlander, for the purpoſe of making the ſtory appear ridiculous. It is indecent, villanous reproach.

This author aſſerts, the evangeliſts contradict one another, in their account of Chriſt's appearing to the eleven, after his reſurrection. He ſtates, that Matthew relates the angels' appearing to the two Maries, ſaying, Behold, Chriſt is gone before you into Galilee. But John, he ſaith, tells a different ſtory: "Then the ſame day, at evening being the firſt day of the week, (the day of Chriſt's reſurrection) when the doors were ſhut, where the diſciples were aſſembled for fear of the Jews, came Jeſus, and ſtood in the midſt of them." "Luke, he ſays, contradicts Matthew more pointedly than John does; for he ſays expreſsly that the meeting was in Jeruſalem, the evening of the ſame day, that Chriſt roſe, and that the eleven

were there." And to make the contradiction more viſible, this man places Luke and John among the eleven, at Galilee, on the day, Chriſt roſe from the dead. He makes Matthew ſay, the eleven were in Galilee, on this evening; and, if ſo, he ſays, Luke and John were among them. And he makes Luke and John, in their Goſpels, ſay, this meeting was in Jeruſalem, on the evening of the ſame day. If all this be true, there is a contradiction between the evangeliſts; but all this is not true. The reader is deſired to obſerve the readineſs of this man, in placing a falſehood, in the chain of this argument, when truth is wanted to fill the vacancy. His firſt aſſertion is falſe, that Matthew ſaid, Chriſt was gone into Galilee. Matthew does not ſay Chriſt was gone into Galilee: He ſaith, Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee. This is not ſaying, he was gone; but intimates his deſign of going in future. According to Matthew, Chriſt was not gone into Galilee; for, in the next verſe, it is ſaid, Jeſus met them. Matthew, then, ſays, Jeſus was in Jeruſalem, on this evening: Luke and John ſay, Jeſus was in Jeruſalem, this evening. The evangeliſts do not contradict one another, concerning this meeting.

In the next place, this author makes Luke one of the eleven, gone into Galilee; while the writer of Luke ſays, the eleven were aſſembled in Jeruſalem, at the very ſame time. But Luke was not one of the eleven: He tells us, in the introduction of his Goſpel, that he wrote his Goſpel

from

from the teſtimony of eye witneſſes, and miniſters of the word. Is this to be called a miſtake, or deſign? Wilful falſehood, or ignorance? Ignorance, no doubt. This man often makes ſmaller errors, than this, deſtroy the credit of a book, in the ſacred volume. This error of ranking Luke with the eleven, according to his way of reaſoning, is ſufficient to deſtroy the credit of his whole performance. No reaſon can be given why an error of this magnitude, ſhould not operate, as forcibly, againſt Deiſm, as he makes ſmaller ones operate, againſt Chriſtianity.

He deſtroys Paul's account of Chriſt's being ſeen by more than five hundred brethren, at once, by ſaying, it is Paul only who ſays it; it is the teſtimony of one man, and that, too, of a man, who did not believe a word of the matter himſelf, at the time it is ſaid to have happened." But how groundleſs his aſſertions? How falſe his reaſoning? Did Paul, before his converſion, ever ſay, Chriſt did not die and riſe from the dead? He knew Chriſt died, and was ſaid to have riſen from the dead: But he did not believe in him, as the promiſed Meſſiah. Paul aſſerts, in his epiſtle to the Corinthians, that Chriſt died, was buried, and raiſed from the dead, and, after his reſurrection, was ſeen of above five hundred brethren, more than half of whom were then living. With this declaration, connect the multitude of Jews, then living in Corinth, and their readineſs to avail themſelves of any circumſtance to have proved Paul a liar. Paul, in this caſe, ſubmits the appeal

peal to numerous living witneſſes ; he puts himſelf in the power of his enemies. Paul's teſtimony, concerning the reſurrection, is important.

This author, with his uſual boldneſs, aſſerts, that, "Matthew and John ſay not a ſyllable about Chriſt's aſcenſion." This is falſe ; John does ſay ſomething about the aſcenſion of Chriſt, "I aſcend unto my Father, and your Father." John xx. 17.

A ſingular inſtance of deſign, in Mr. Paine, is his ſaying, "That, the whole ſpace of time, from the crucifixion to the aſcenſion, is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four, and that all the circumſtances are reported to have happened, nearly about the ſame ſpot, Jeruſalem." From this aſſertion, he draws the concluſion,— "That it is impoſſible to find, in any ſtory upon record, ſo many, and ſuch glaring abſurdities and contradictions and falſehoods, as are in thoſe books." The ſhorter the time, and the more upon one ſpot a fact is exhibited, the eaſier it is, to relate it, with exactneſs. This author confines the time, between the crucifixion and the aſcenſion, to four days, and the ſpot, on which the circumſtances happened, to Jeruſalem : The deſign of this contrivance was, to impreſs the reader with the contradictions and abſurdities contained in the evangeliſts. Is this the man of ſcience, who often ſends his readers to the ſtars and far diſtant worlds, to learn moral truth ? Is this author ſo engaged to make Bible falſehood appear, as often to aſſert falſehoods, to make us believe him ?

him ? Or is he ſo ignorant, as not to know the contents of the New Teſtament ? Reader, judge for thyſelf; judge, who adheres to truth, Thomas Paine, or the artleſs writers of the New Teſtament. As to the time, between the crucifixion and the aſcenſion, John informs us, that Jeſus appeared to his diſciples on the evening of the day of his reſurrection ; and then, eight days after, he met with them again. Nor is this all. After theſe two appearances, Jeſus ſhowed himſelf to his diſciples, at the ſea of Tiberias, which is, at leaſt, ſixty miles from Jeruſalem. Luke, in the book of Acts, referring to his Goſpel, ſays : "To whom alſo he ſhewed himſelf alive, after his paſſion, by many infallible proofs, being ſeen of them *forty days*." Theſe four days are forty days, and the ſpot, Jeruſalem, is ſixty miles diſtant from it.

This man has confirmed his infidelity with an oath. "So help me God." He ſwears the chriſtian religion is not true. This oath is but the confirmation of an opinion ; and the opinion may be falſe, notwithſtanding his oath. In oppoſition to his oath, in confirmation of an opinion, is placed St. Paul's oath in confirmation of his miraculous converſion. "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not." Admit this oath in confirmation of a fact, and Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed, and Deiſm is overthrown.

A bold aſſertion, in this author, is, "that no ſuch book exiſted, as the New Teſtament, till more than four hundred years after Chriſt."—Whether this aſſertion originated from ignorance,

or from artful deſign, is not certain. Be it which it may, it is a falſehood ; for every one of the evangeliſts, and many of St. Paul's epiſtles, have been quoted, from about the apoſtolic age, to the preſent time.

The hiſtorical proof, the New Teſtament was written about the time, it is ſaid to be written, is, the quotations made from the evangeliſts, by Ignatius and Policarp, men who converſed with the apoſtles.* This kind of evidence, for the New Teſtament being written, at the time, it is ſaid to be written, is ſtill ſtronger, from the quotations of profeſſed infidels, who lived within the four firſt centuries, Celſus, Porphyry, and Julian.—Celſus lived in the ſecond century, Porphyry in the third, and Julian in the fourth. Each of theſe men attacked Chriſtianity, and, in their attack, they ſpeak of the four evangeliſts, and quote ſome of their contents ; but they could not quote what was not written.

This author does not deny, but the epiſtles, which bear St. Paul's name, were written by him. He adds, it is a matter of no importance, who wrote them, ſince the writer attempts to prove his doctrine by argument. This is falſe. Paul himſelf tells us the contrary : " But I certify you, brethren, that the Goſpel, which was preached of me, is not after men. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt." Gal. i. 11, 12.

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* Ignatius became Biſhop of Antioch, about thirty ſeven ears after the aſcenſion of Chriſt.

He ſays, moreover, "Paul does not pretend to have been a witneſs to any of the ſcenes told of the reſurrection and the aſcenſion." It is true, Paul was not a ſpectator, and eye witneſs, of the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Chriſt; but he makes pretenſions to be a witneſs of the reſurrection; "Laſt of all, he was ſeen of me alſo, as of one born out of due time." 1 Cor. xv. 18.

He cenſures St. Paul for ſaying one ſtar differeth from another ſtar in glory. He ſays, Paul ought to have ſaid, "The ſtars differ in diſtance." Great Philoſopher! Man of ſcience! Tell us, the ſtars are at different diſtances! This is aſſuming for a truth, what neither he, nor any other man, is able to prove.

The foregoing remarks are ſubmitted to the candid reader: They are made upon the principal arguments, which Mr. Paine uſes, to prove the Bible fabulous. Few books have appeared, in the Engliſh language, more replete with falſehood, and ignorance; more deſtitute of truth, than his Age of Reaſon.

Should the reader ever examine his work, he will find many errors, miſrepreſentations, and ſophiſtical arguments, which have not been noticed in theſe remarks. Enough, however, of his fallacious reaſoning, has been detected, to create a ſuſpicion, truth is not on his ſide.

His general method is firſt to miſrepreſent a fact, or aſſume a truth, and then cry out againſt the creature of his own formation. He is like a madman, who boldly charges the innocent citi-

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zen, with barbarity, and murder, and hints at unheard of crimes, and then cries, O, dreadful! O, horrible! A liar, a cut throat, a raſcal, a villain, every thing deteſtable, and awfully wicked!

Like all other infidels, who have gone before him, his manner of attacking Chriſtianity is no inconſiderable proof of the weakneſs, and wickedneſs of his cauſe. Infidels have always neglected paying attention to the evidences of revealed religion; they never confront them with manly reaſoning and fair argument; but deſcend to a mode of attack, which, on every other ſubject, would render a man ridiculous and contemptible. And were Mr. Paine to adopt the ſame method of treating any other ſubject, he would be judged inſane.

Ignorant and corrupted, muſt that man be, who can make himſelf believe, that Thomas Paine has ſpoken truth, in his Age of Reaſon. None, but men of depraved morals, and a bad heart, can read his book, without indignation. A bold, profane and daring ſpirit, runs through his whole book. He ſpeaks of ſacred things with indecency. He makes ridicule ſupply the place of ſolid argument. He is engaged, with uncommon zeal, to load men, highly eſteemed, with abuſive epithets. He calls Moſes a chief aſſaſſin; Joſhua, Samuel and David, monſters and impoſtors; the jewiſh kings a parcel of raſcals; the prophets liars, and St. Paul a fool.

Whoever receives the ſentiments contained in his book, muſt receive, with them, a ſourneſs of

ſpirit,

ſpirit, which will imbitter him, againſt all who remain friendly to true religion.

Dr. Prieſtly ſays: "The cauſe of infidelity lies in the temper of the heart. Men ſeldom reject Chriſtianity, in theory, till they have long diſregarded it in practice." Men, living in the habit of irreligion, are, every day, growing in readineſs, to embrace infidelity. With a practical diſregard to the duties of piety, is connected religious ignorance. A man takes no pains to gain an acquaintance with the ſubject, his heart does not love; it hence becomes eaſy, for wicked men, to take ſhelter under covert of Deiſm.

Many men, inconſiderately, take for granted, that things are queſtionable, becauſe they hear them often diſputed. This is far from being a juſt concluſion; for even matters of fact, are often controverted. Men are in great danger of becoming Deiſts too ſoon. It is raſhneſs, in the extreme, to act decidedly againſt Divine Revelation, before a man has paid proper attention to the ſubject. It were moſt devoutly to be wiſhed, that all perſons would examine the evidence of the chriſtian religion, before they make the concluſion, the Bible is but mere fable.

Perſons, whoſe faith, in revealed religion, has been ſhaken by deiſtical influence, ſhould carefully examine this weighty ſubject. Chriſtianity will bear the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny. Chriſtians, it is incumbent on you, to furniſh your minds with the arguments, in favor of our holy religion; you ſhould hold yourſelves in readineſs, to meet the

infidel

infidel on his own ground, or on any fair ground whatever. Will you tamely allow your profeſſion to be inſulted? Will you quietly ſuffer Deiſts to divulge their abſurdities, in your hearing, and before your families, and make them no reply? In ſuch a caſe, ſilence is a crime. Revealed religion is defenſible; infidelity is not tenable. Both Chriſtians, and perſons doubting of the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, will pleaſe to conſider, that infidels take away all revealed religion, and ſubſtitute nothing in its room. They take away all the guide of our faith, and weaken, inexpreſſibly, all the influential conſiderations drawn from the future world. They remove the only foundation of comfortable hope. They looſen every moral obligation. They ſet piety and morality afloat. They place nothing adequate to our wants in the room of revealed religion. Nothing can govern, on their principles, but the lawleſs paſſions of man. Their ſyſtem makes no room for ſaving faith, or its fruits. They laugh at the obſervance of the chriſtian Sabbath, and think it might, as well, be obſerved once in forty days, as once in ſeven. They think no better of the inſtitution of marriage. They ſuppoſe, a man may, as well, have five wives as one; and as conſiſtently put away his wife, in a month, as keep her through life. The ſolemnity of an oath, with them, muſt be a mere formality; an oath, long a principal means of inveſtigating truth, with them, muſt be as unmeaning, as the uſual profanity of the vile ſwearer.

It is true, Mr. Paine pretends to exhibit creation as ſome powerful inſtructor: but, in ſo doing, he only inſults the greater part of the human race: For it is aſtronomy, chiefly, which is his inſtructor, a ſcience which, not one, perhaps, in a million, is under advantages to know.

This is a ſtate of probation; men are acting for eternity. The Bible is the only book, which claims divine authority, in teaching men how to ſecure the happineſs of a future life. Admit the Bible to be inſpired by God, and what conſummate folly it is, to ſuffer ourſelves to be cheated out of eternal happineſs, by the deceitful reaſonings of men, who hate divine truth.

To gain ſatisfaction upon this ſubject, we muſt conſider the united force of evidence, ariſing from the fulfilment of numerous prophecies, and from miraculous operations. Add to this the ſpirituality of the holy Scriptures. All the teachings of the ſacred writings, are calculated to rectify the diſorders of the human heart, and to reform the manners of human life.

The unity of deſign, running through the volume of inſpiration, is no ſmall proof of its divine original. All the writers of the Scriptures teach the ſame important doctrines. All the commandments, exhortations, warnings, and admonitions, contained in the Bible, urge men to practiſe holineſs. To make men ſober, juſt, temperate, virtuous and good, is the united deſign of all the inſpired writings. Had the Bible been the invention of men, not inſpired, we ſhould expect to find ſelf intereſt to have been the great object of their purſuit. Some ſcheme for the acquiſition of wealth or honor, ſome contrivance ſuited to the intereſt of a party, or ſome plan formed for the conveniency of gratifying the baſe paſſions of the human heart, would have diſtinguiſhed ſuch a work. But how far removed is revealed religion, from inſtructions, which lead men to ſenſual gratification! "Chriſt is the only founder of a religion, in the hiſtory of mankind, which is totally unconnected with all human policy and government, and therefore totally unconducive to any worldly purpoſes whatever."

The propagation of the chriſtian religion, its triumphs, its conqueſts, are convincing proofs of divine almighty aid, in its behalf. Twelve men, moſtly illiterate, without art, without

power,

power, without numerous friends, without the ſword, without the countenance and ſupport of civil government, were the inſtruments, who propagated the religion, which finally ſubdued the Roman government. Who can remain an infidel, when it is conſidered, that Chriſtianity, in its firſt publication, had every conceivable obſtruction? It made its way, in the midſt of ignorance, deep rooted prejudices, and the united oppoſition of civil power. The very exiſtence of open infidels, is far from weakening the evidence in favor of Chriſtianity. Inſpiration predicts the riſe of ſuch men, as ſhould deny the only Lord who bought them.

Divine Revelation has, for ages, received the attacks of its potent enemies, and it remains unſhaken. The repeated attempts made againſt divine truth ſhew, more fully, its immovable foundation: Like the mighty rock, which, planted on the borders of the ocean, receives the foaming angry waves, and continues unmoved.

Revealed religion will live, while the names of its foes will be conſigned over to oblivion, or be mentioned, only, as monuments of human folly. Truth will finally prevail and triumph. The words of Moſes may be applied to the church of God, in reſpect to its adverſaries. "And thine enemies ſhall be found liars unto thee, and thou ſhalt tread upon their high places." Deut. xxxiii. 29.

Reader, the words of God, contained in the holy Scriptures, are thy life. Thou art in a ſtate of trial for an eternal duration; thou muſt ſoon appear before thy judge, and be judged according to the glorious Goſpel of God. Whether willing or unwilling, obedient or diſobedient, thou muſt appear, at this tribunal, and abide the trial, and receive a ſentence never to be reverſed. The holy Scriptures were given for thy inſtruction in righteouſneſs, for the guide of thy faith, for the government of thy heart and practice; for thy conſolation and hope. Read them and be wiſe. Obey God.—Beware of men. Give the inſpired apoſtles the credit, due to all honeſt and good men, and we ſhall not depart from their teſtimony, in ſupport of the truth of the holy Scriptures. We ſhall admit, as certainly true, their declaration: "For we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, when we made known unto you, the power and coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were eye witneſſes of his Majeſty."

THE END.

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